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DAYS IN LAKELAND

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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A WESTMORLAND SHEPHERD AND HERDWICK LAMB

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DAYS IN LAKELAND

PAST AND PRESENT

BY

E. M. WARD, M.A., B.Sc.

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WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS
AND AN ENDPAPER MAP

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PREFACE

IT has been impossible in the following pages to acknowledge my frequent indebtedness to the works of Mr. W. G. Collingwood. To them, and especially to his *Lake District History*, I owe almost all the facts mentioned that relate to the history and antiquities of the Lake Country. On the various published papers of the late Miss Armitt I have also drawn considerably for information.

My most grateful thanks are due to Mr. Collingwood for reading the whole book in manuscript and giving me criticism, advice, and information I could ill have done without, and to Mr. J. Broatch, Mrs. Rawnsley, and Mr. W. Wilson, Hon. Sec. of the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association, for reading portions of it and making many valuable suggestions.

For much general help and information I have to thank, among others, Mr. John Cannon, Barrow-in-Furness; Mr. H. P. Cornish, Keswick; Mr. C. R. Cowtan of the Lowwood Gunpowder Company, who lent me the photograph of charcoal burners; Mr.

H. Johnstone, Edinburgh; the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty for preparing the map of their properties at the Lakes; Mr. Ernest Plaskett, Rosthwaite; and Mr. A. J. Pressland, Cambridge.

E. M. WARD

Crag Foot, Grasmere
June 1929

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DAYS IN LAKELAND

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DAYS IN LAKELAND

CHAPTER I

THE LAKE COUNTRY YEAR

In place of the deep summer-green of the herbage and fern, many rich colours play into each other over the surface of the mountains; turf (the tints of which are interchangeably tawny-green, olive, and brown), beds of withered fern, and grey rocks, being harmoniously blended together. The mosses and lichens are never so fresh and flourishing as in winter, if it be not a season of frost; . . . Add to this the hoar-frost and snow.—*Description of the Scenery of the Lakes*, WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

IT is in summer that most people see the Lake Country. It is in summer that the Lake Country is at its worst. It is then green all over except for its dark rocks and screes, and for the luminous spaces of its lakes, and even these in calm weather are so full of green reflections that such a pool as little Rydal Water becomes invisible from the surrounding slopes, and seems changed to green pastures, fairy pastures, miraculously added in the night to complete the green curve of its grassy hollow. The trees are green, with a greenness that grows darker and more sombre as the season advances. The grass is green, as, indeed, the valley pastures always

are in this country of grazing sheep and frequent rain. The bracken is green, so that all but the higher fells are green to their tops. Lakeland weather is, of course, quite capable of imparting variety even to this quiet uniformity of colour, into which the brilliance of winter and spring seems to have sunk as into a green sea, but summer heat often brings with it a faint haze that takes all colour and detail from the fells.

The month of August includes within itself the least pleasing features of the Lake Country summer. Some people find the dales relaxing, and, indeed, it can be very hot even at Grasmere, where the dale has a wide opening to the north, or in the great hollow of Keswick, where, according to local tradition, airs blow from the sea. There is in August a secondary maximum of rainfall, an increase slight compared with the winter maximum, but enough to depress tourists, and certainly rain falling from a hot and leaden sky into a green dale full of leafy trees seems an abnormally wet and sombre thing.

There is, besides, no hunting in August, and to those who share the opinion that foxes enjoy being hunted there can be few more strenuous delights than following a Lake Country hunt. Everyone is on foot, and unless fox and hounds outclimb the huntsmen and disappear, as frequently happens, into the snow and clouds of the heights, exercise and excitement are so combined in the chase that to the few who manage to be in at the kill, life has, at the moment, nothing better to offer.

Yet there are many pleasant features about a Lakeland August. There is, as already noted, warmth. To walk up to Styhead Tarn in the blazing sunshine of an

August day, with the air full of warm scents of sunlit turf and bogland, and so still that the swift beating of a raven's wings from high in the hot sky sounds curiously loud and clear; to push on, stalwart and perspiring, to the top of the Gable or Scafell Pike, and find the air up there as hot and as still as it is in the basin of Wasdale Head far below, is peculiarly fascinating in a country so often cool and cloudy as is the Lake District. And no picnicking motorists can wish for a happier fate than to spend a long August noon lying prone on some pebbly beach beside Coniston Lake, looking through the reed stems over the calm water, pale beneath the heat haze, across to the Monk Coniston Moors, and hearing nothing but the faint stir of lake water among the reeds and the sound of oars from a boat far off across the lake. Even in August, where can beauty be found so flawless and undimmed as in looking up the tree-shadowed Brathay to the wine-dark slopes of Wetherlam and the Langdale Pikes, or where the Borrowdale birches stir in some faint and sunlit breeze that leaves the still reaches of the Derwent below them as lucent and green as the light that filters through their leaves? Where indeed, except in those same places in autumn, or in winter, or in spring?

Also in August there is traffic, and sports; regattas, motor-boat races, tennis tournaments, swimming races, and other diversions as well. The summer traffic in the Lakeland dales provides a problem something akin to that of dealing with a river that runs nearly dry for nine months in the year and rushes down in full flood for the remaining three. The broad and naked highways designed to accommodate the crowded currents of

summer traffic appear, in the quiet of the rest of the year, as forlorn as the empty flood-bed of some mountain torrent. In August the roar of passing cars, and motor buses, and charabancs, from the main road through Ambleside, Grasmere, and Keswick, sounds all through the daylight hours, and rises with climbing tourists far up the hills. To some extent the August sports are related to the August traffic. The days when the dalesmen, without training other than that necessarily afforded by the activities of their daily lives, competed in the wrestling ring, or the pole jump, or the fell races, are passing. Accessibility has increased competition. Specialist athletes meet each other at Grasmere, Keswick, Hawkshead, or Ambleside, and their contests are watched by thousands of people from outside the district. The Grasmere Sports are managed by a London syndicate, and apart from such work as that provided by the erection and subsequent removal of the grandstand, Grasmere takes little part in the sports beyond the entry of some of its stalwarts in one or other of the competitions. About ten thousand outsiders, on the average, motor to this most noted of the Lakeland athletic sports, and the Grasmere Sports are merely one amongst many such gatherings in the Lake Country dales. At them the ancient sport of wrestling takes first place. Wrestling is of unknown antiquity at the Lakes. There is a legend of the " Cork Lad of Kentmere", who in the sixteenth century is reputed to have wrestled before King Edward VI in London, but authentic records are much later, and relate to such noted wrestlers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as that Thomas Nicholson

who danced all night at Penrith, walked by Patterdale and Kirkstone to Ambleside, and there, after a brief nap in a chair, "grassed" four large opponents, of whom one weighed eighteen stone. About this time also the curate of Buttermere chapel, who eked out his stipend, even though it was raised from £28 to £40 a year, by farming the fishery of Buttermere, was a famous wrestler, and used his great strength besides in helping his parishioners in the harvest field, in peat gathering, and all the strenuous work of the dale farms. The Grasmere Sports are often deluged with an August downpour, but wrestling continues just the same on the slippery ground, and the fell races are not delayed because the runners disappear almost immediately in the clouds that hang low down on Butter Crags. In spite of the modern commercialism of sports at the Lakes, local men, engaged in their ancient local sports, are not to be deterred by the vagaries of the mountain weather, and the spirit that led them in the old days to wrestle for nothing but honour and a leather belt still urges them to feats that a cash prize, however welcome, could never by itself inspire.

In a region such as the Lake Country the seasons dominate everything. A mountainous district, still fairly well wooded, with almost all its lower fell slopes covered with bracken fern, the changing seasons bring with them changes in the scenery of which the casual summer visitor can have no conception. In summer the full-leaved trees tend to dwarf the Lake fells, that are, after all, but little fells. In winter the woods thin to a haze of leafless branches, dark but transparent as a cloud shadow, and through and above them the fells gain

an added majesty. The vale of Grasmere in December sunshine, with the russet bracken covering all the slopes up to the snows, is so incredibly full of colour and brilliance that it seems no more akin to the tree-shadowed quietness of its summer days than the valley of Newlands in November, tawny with bracken and withered grasses and a strange, coppery, light of sunshine through the snow-clouds above Hindscarth, resembles the same vale when grass and bracken are green in the warmth of an August afternoon. Matterdale Common in September, with Blencathra and Skiddaw and the Keswick fells poking their gnome-like summits, hazy with summer, above the purple undulations of the flowering heather, is no more different from the same moorland when, snow-capped, the great hills look across the bleak spaces of the common, than the autumn air at Rydal, hazy with mist and the red-gold glow of its great beeches, is from the clearness of a January day, when the scentless air from the snows of Rydal Head sinks, without stirring them, down among the seaweed-like traceries of the leafless beech twigs.

More than its trees, however, it is the bracken of the Lake Country that makes the changing of the seasons vivid as a picture to the dalesfolk. In the last twenty or thirty years it has greatly increased, particularly in Eskdale. Farmers do not like bracken. In the old days it was used for thatching, and it is still harvested for bedding in stable and byre, but as pasture it is useless. It covers many miles of the fell slopes, and, with stubborn tenacity and widely ramifying roots, that may reach fifteen feet down, resists all attempts to eradicate it. In Scotland, however, the bracken has

HARVESTING BRACKEN

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recently been attacked by some parasite or fungus, and farmers are hoping that good pasture may take its place: even heather is of more use than bracken, and mountain sheep graze contentedly enough on heather hills. Yet to those of us who are not farmers the loss of bracken at the Lakes, even if heather were to take its place, would be sad indeed. It is to the bracken that the lower Lake fells owe their shimmering greenness in a summer wind, their glow of tawny colour in winter, that faint, wild scent of sunlit fern that seems to the wanderer the very breath of the hills. Except in its brief flowering the heather that covers the slopes of Skiddaw is dark as a cloud shadow on the fells, while the rigid fronds of the bracken, bravely confronting the winter, only lose their russet splendour when it is dimmed to purple after rain, or is hidden in the uncurling fronds of spring. In the rainy climate of western Scotland bracken climbs two thousand feet up the slopes, and though at the Lakes its upper limit varies, the tawny glow of it is continued upwards in winter by the warm tinge of the bent grasses. From the top of Honister Pass, on some bright January day, Borrowdale, with its bleached green pastures and the dark shadows of its leafless woods invisible, seems but a ditch sunk in a world of russet fells. The gold of sunshine, the russet of sunlit bracken, and the tawny hue of the fell grasses, reach back, all aglow together, to the far ridge of Helvellyn, that alone is colourless with height and distance.

As the face of the country alters with those remote and skyey changes that set the sun climbing higher or daily sinking lower above the fells, so does life in the dales pass through its accustomed changes. In the summer landladies,

hotel-keepers, boatmen, horse drivers and motor drivers, mountain guides, farmers who arrange that their cows shall give most milk in the summer, all these await the tourists' pleasure. With the passing of summer the dales sink back into something of that quietness that was once theirs all through the year, a quietness that is emphasized by the departure from them of those off-comes[1] who own houses in the dales and who, like the song-thrush, object to the Lake Country winter. The roads, save for a few motor buses and tradesmen's vans, are empty, and most of the lakes revert to a loneliness as deep as that before man came. The Ullswater steamers, drawn up on shore, lie, ridiculously, in a meadow above Pooley Bridge, and from the deserted boat landings at Keswick, the smoke of little fires and glitter of sunshine on upturned keels show where, across the deserted water, boatmen are busy about their craft, laid up for winter in the woods of the Isthmus.

Moreover, in the Lake Country the changing seasons not only alter the whole face of the landscape, not only divide the dalesfolk's year into two periods, the tourist season and the non-tourist season, but also advance and retreat themselves in so leisurely and apparently erratic a manner as to draw the attention of the least observant to the mysteries of their annual progress. Here the state of the season is not only a matter concerned with the sun and the latitude: here the fells take a hand in the astronomical game, and what with their height, and the shadows they cast, and the way they face or turn their slopes from the sun, introduce

[1] People not native to the district.

an infinite complexity into the changing of the seasons. The Wasdale Head mountains, seen from the lake road in the low December sunshine, with their sunlit peaks and buttresses separated by gulfs of blackness, have a kind of goblin brilliance that sets them quite apart from those almost featureless shapes upon whose hollows and crags alike the summer sun pours down. In March at Grasmere the new grass may be already a vivid green where the great meadow of the Boothwaite lies sheltered beneath the southern face of Helm Crag, while along the slopes towards Red Bank the shadowed western shores of the lake still sink, in all the sober colourings of the end of winter, into waters blurred with the vague mists of the last night's frost. So in doomed Mardale the cold, clear gloom of winter lingers in the hill-shadowed basin about the Dun Bull Inn, while along the sunnier shores of Haweswater the gorse is already in flower, and so the sunless hollow of Scales Tarn may be full of frozen shadows when the first bracken is beginning to uncurl on the great southward-facing slopes of the buttresses of Blencathra.

In our islands summer comes from the south, winter from the north. But here in Lakeland the seasons not only advance and retreat along their accustomed level ways, so that spring is later on the Solway than about Morecambe Bay, and winter spreads south from the Border, but they climb the fells, leisurely and fitfully, so that week by week summer may be watched rising with the fresh green of sprouting bracken up the slopes of Seat Sandal, or Maidenmoor, or Coniston Old Man, till they are green almost to their frost-shattered tops. And winter here sinks down upon the dales from above:

indeed, it never really leaves the higher summits. Scafell and Skiddaw, Great Gable and Helvellyn, and their peers rise into altitudes from which winter only certainly retreats for the few hours of a sunny summer day. With the fall of darkness, even in July and August, winter may often close about them again, and while tourists are peacefully sleeping beneath one blanket in the Rosthwaite hotels below, Scafell and the Gable endure amid the stars those remote rigours of frost and snow-squall which make the summer night a link between the arctic weather of one winter and the next. So in autumn winter hovers, visible, incarnate, above the dales; now whitening one summit, now another; creeping one morning so low that Helm Crag and Latrigg in their snows become one with the lonely whiteness of their greater brethren; then shrinking upwards again until only a long streak of white on Fairfield's western slope and a patch or two on the dark fells above Easedale Tarn remind Grasmere of the coming winter; so winter seems to step delicately about the dales before it finally descends into them.

Spring advances as capriciously as winter, and now again the fells stand as a background on which the changing seasons cast the coloured shadows of their passage, so that along the upper slopes may be seen the weeks of contest between the rising tide of spring and the retreating winter. Spring advances northward along the dales. Warm and sunlit, and bright with the green glitter of new silver-birch leaves, it lingers in the vale of Rusland, while winter, from beyond the Monk Coniston Moors, looks over it from the snowy top of Coniston Old Man. And these same Coniston snows, now huge against the west, rise cold and dead-white,

an arctic desert yet, against the sunset, whose golden glow lies so warmly on the budding hazels that stand about the quiet and light-filled levels of Esthwaite Water. Fish in the high-lying tarns are still haggard with their winter privations when anglers on the lakes below are catching trout already plump with spring warmth and good fare, and long after lake fish have ceased to be ensnared by the bracken clock-fly their mountain brethren rise eagerly to this evidence of their belated spring. Rhododendrons in trim suburban gardens at Windermere are rusty and dishevelled with dead blooms before that strange patch of them that lies high up on the slopes of Rydal Park, blossoms into a rosy square on the hill-side. Beside Coniston Water the primroses are faded when the lane up to Lawson Park on the Monk Coniston Moors is still flowery with their pale gold, and when the bluebells have flowered on Peel Island they, and the rising warmth of springtime, may be followed up, higher day by day, into the fell-side woods.

From Grasmere valley the snows and the coming spring are seen to engage in a protracted contest along the fell ridges that enclose the dale. The vivid russet of the faded bracken grows dim upon the lower slopes, passes imperceptibly, and is replaced by a faint green that spreads slowly up and up the fells, and all the while the snows may be hovering about the tops. One day the trodden path that leads over the side of Seat Sandal towards Ullswater may stand out, very green, upon slopes still faintly tawny with the bleached winter grasses; the next it extends downwards, from a newly whitened shoulder, a snowy thread amidst the rougher

herbage that conceals the light fall. One day the juniper bushes that dot the slopes of Yewbarrow and Silverhow may look like dark cloud shadows on the fresh green of the hill-side, and the next stand black amongst the snow. One week a gusty north-easter may set the snow dancing in strange little whirls up on Rydal Fell, and the next, in a hazy sunshine full of bird songs, all that recalls snow may be the flowering thorn bushes far up on Stone Arthur.

And when at last spring has climbed to the tops, it has been so long about it that it meets autumn there, and at once the waning year begins to set its impress, lower and lower, day by day, on the fells, so that they are never free from those delicate changes that mark the passage of our earth through space.

CHAPTER II

THE HEART OF LAKELAND: BORROWDALE

This valley, so replete with hideous grandeur, is known by the name of the straits of Borrodale.—WILLIAM GILPIN, 1772

TO all true lovers of the Lake Country Borrowdale is its very precious centre and the land of heart's desire. For here is beauty: beauty of sound, when the murmur of Sour Milk Gill fills the windless hollow of Seathwaite in a summer dawn or a north wind whispers of winter through "t'auld esh pollard", though the Rosthwaite pastures about it are already green in the April sunshine: beauty of silence when at evening stillness closes over the dale, a stillness as full of mountain shadows and as remote from man as the clouds that reach from fell to fell above: beauty of form and incomparable colour. For here, perhaps more than in any other dale, the atmosphere and the woods, the crags and running waters, the flying sunshine and cloud shadows, play secret, glorious games together, just as they played them long ago. So that the clear blue shadow which fills the vale of Stonethwaite on a spring afternoon looks as tangible a thing as Eagle Crag, high in the sky above it; the cold glitter on hollies, seen against the winter sunshine in Johnny Wood, seems as much a part of the

dale as that flush of faintest green on the Borrowdale birches that in April looks as if it were but a reflection from the green waters of the Derwent, crystal clear, below them. Moreover, sunk in a waste of big fells, Borrowdale is shielded from something of the glare and rattle of the twentieth century, just as its green grasslands are shielded from any great fierceness of sunshine by that moving network of cloud and mountain shadow which lightens and darkens upon it with the changing seasons and the march of mountain weather.

In the valley of Borrowdale there is change indeed, but change that takes place slowly. Its streams and steep fell slopes, and the wild weather that takes the dale in its stride between mountain and mountain, do, indeed, between them engage upon hasty action at times, as when the infant Derwent suddenly rages across the Seathwaite flats or a landslip sends rocks bounding across the valley road, but such hastiness of action does not extend to Borrowdale man. Building-land here is scarce and difficult to buy. In 1819 there were four inhabited houses at Seathwaite. There are still four. Rosthwaite had thirteen, and has seventeen now. Stonethwaite had seven, and has ten. Watendleth had three, and there are still three. Seatoller, that had only five, has risen to sixteen, but here cottages have been built for quarrymen. There are a few modern houses about Grange and Manesty and Lodore, and time and again roads and bridges have been widened, but the many vicissitudes experienced by the dalesfolk since some of the more cautious of their predecessors raised the fort on Castle Crag have changed the dale but superficially. The woodlands have shrunk; some few

MAY-TIME IN BORROWDALE

LANGSTRATH AND EAGLE CRAG

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little clusters of grey and white houses grown up; the energetic grubbings of long-dead miners left here and there a mound like that at the door of a rabbit's burrow; but such changes are less noticeable than the sweeping of a cloud shadow across the dale, much less so than that recurring miracle that sets winter Borrowdale apart from summer Borrowdale and makes the dale, all astir in the April breeze with the glittering green of silver-birches, seem a world apart from the same dale when the clear gold of their fallen leaves and the purple of their twigs are dimmed by October rains. And yet the outside world has ever had a hand in Borrowdale affairs. Remote though it is, isolated as it has always been, yet it has been exploited by money-making folk, perfectly indifferent to its charms, and whose activities were of the greatest benefit to the dalesmen.

Even in the days when men commonly walked to wherever they might want to go, Borrowdale was comparatively inaccessible. From the south it was blocked by not only the great group of the Scafell and Bow Fell massifs, but by a confused wilderness of lower fells further south, amidst which wild tracks from upper Eskdale, the Duddon valley and the Langdales, made their way over Esk Hause and the Ure Gap, Rossett Gill and the Stake Pass into Borrowdale. An old road up Grains Gill above Seathwaite, referred to in 1294 as the "causey", can still be traced, and the track over the Stake Pass was a recognized route in the thirteenth century. To the west two routes led, over Sty Head and Honister Pass, but these passes once surmounted, left the traveller confronted with miles of fell country before he could hope to reach the sunlit lowlands by

the sea. To eastwards there was a packhorse route from Grasmere by Far Easedale and Greenup, while the fells between Thirlmere and Borrowdale were relatively easy to cross, and it was over them that the monks of Furness Abbey were granted, in the thirteenth century, two rights of way for their journeys between Borrowdale and Low Furness. Northwards only was there a level outlet to Borrowdale, and there rough tracks had to be trodden out between the fells and the lake, the eastern shore of which was subject to landslips near Barrow. That these tracks along the lake were bad is shown by the extensive use made of the lake as a highway. The Company of Mines Royal, with its headquarters at Keswick, maintained in the reign of Elizabeth an active traffic on Derwentwater, while as late as the end of the eighteenth century boats from Grange still carried slate, wood, charcoal, and lead ore down the lake to land them at Crow Park, near Keswick.

Even in the valley itself communications were by no means easy. Above Grange the gorge known as "the straits of Borrowdale" was avoided by the main track climbing over the hill spur and passing beside the Bowder Stone, just as a similar gorge at the exit of Grasmere was avoided by the old road over White Moss common, while higher up the valley the way had perforce to cross river flats, liable to flood. No road fit for wheeled vehicles existed in the dale till about 1760. Everything too heavy for a man was carried on horseback—bundles of hay, manure, baskets of farm produce, firewood. The streams were crossed by fords, like the old ford above the stone bridge that replaced it at Grange, or by bridges, wide enough for one horse, and in early days

built of timber or of long stone flags resting on piles of stone. The arched stone bridges were built later, probably between about 1660 and 1760, but at a time when pack-horses were still in general use. Such an arch is that of Stockley Bridge, on the way to Sty Head, and that this route remained of importance is shown by the fact that the little bridge was widened shortly before 1853. The ancient bridge over the Derwent below the Rosthwaite stepping-stones, which had been washed away before Green wrote in 1819, must have been a pack-horse bridge, like the old Ashness Bridge, which had also been swept downstream shortly before his visit. Watendleth Bridge is likewise a pack-horse bridge, as was Seathwaite Bridge, and Grange Bridge when it was built in 1678.

These bridges, and what is known of the ancient tracks over the Borrowdale fells, show that there was considerable coming and going in the old days, for tracks do not long survive the Lake Country weather unless they are in common use. Over all these ancient ways, whether fell or valley, brooded the menace of the weather. Sunk like a ditch between steep slopes of fell, the dale acts as a channel for the escape of waters flowing from about thirty square miles of mountain upland. At the head of Borrowdale the tremendous rains of the Scafell group pour down into the Seathwaite branch of the valley, while the Langstrath beck, when its waters are up, turns the vale of Stonethwaite into a lake and, mingling its stream with that of the Derwent, floods the main valley below Rosthwaite. At the outlet of the dale the flood waters of the Derwent have been known, according to an early writer, to sweep clean over Grange

Bridge, while Derwentwater backs up the flooded river and converts all the flats below Grange into a part of itself. The wild, sweet scent of the myrtle, or gale, growing on the "morasses" here was mentioned by almost all the early tourist explorers of Borrowdale. Thus most of the old dale tracks must have been as subtly compounded of water and stones as still are the path to Stockley Bridge and the ancient little road above Stonethwaite, while in times of exceptional outbursts on the part of the weather, trees, stone walls, and great rocks were torn from the fell-sides and carried into the dale, as happened when in 1795 a "waterspout" came down Coom Gill above Rosthwaite, and in 1817, when a "spout" of water some three miles broad descended on Stonethwaite from a cloud on the mountain-top.

Travelling in the dale was then, only too often, a "teptious job", while up on the fells tracks were quickly obliterated, gashed by new-born torrents, buried in scree, beaten upon by a whirl of storm. A modern traveller would scarcely care to lead his horse down to Wasdale from Sty Head, yet laden beasts must commonly have come over here in the days of pack-horses; Borrowdale Hause up on to Honister Pass from Seatoller was by 1830 "no longer passable for carriages"; the Stake route was described in 1819 as being ruined by the waters. So even the established horse trackways suffered periodical destruction, while walkers had to be content with a whitened stone or two, or successive cairns, to lead them across the fells.

Wherefore Borrowdale was isolated; so isolated that in a country-side itself remote from the outside world the name Borrowdale came to be synonymous with

being behind the times. To a Cumbrian outside the dale anything was possible in "sec a pleace as Borrowdale", particularly "i' them auld times, lang, lang sen", when "just ower t'fell fra t'Watendleth, in a wood abeun t' Rostwhate, fwok sed theer leev't a hobthrush". Clarke, in 1789, said that the dale was hardly civilized twenty years earlier, and inveighed fractiously against the obstinacy of the Borrowdale farmers, who would persist in loading their hay on horses when there were roads good for carts. In 1873 school was still held in the little church at Stonethwaite, and this was held to be much behind the times at a period when such a custom had been discontinued almost everywhere else in the Lake Country. Even nowadays a foolish prejudice exists against the "narrow-mindedness" of Borrowdale folk.

In spite of its remoteness, however, long before Borrowdale began to have a history there were people there who felt it necessary to protect themselves against enemies, and at Reecastle above Lodore, and on the top of Castle Crag, these earliest of the dalesfolk raised fortifications. To us their enemies are as shadowy as themselves. But in the days when Borrowdale man lived, as the ravens and buzzards do still, in a constant expectation of danger, there must have been latent perils everywhere: in the gleamy light that shone between flying clouds on the distant waters of Sty Head Gill; in the grave shadow that seemed always to rest on the distant cone of Skiddaw even in a cloudless sky; in the cry of wind and water through the gorge below the Bowder Stone; even in the still creeping of moonlight down the western fells that must have been broken, too often, by sounds of battle and heartbreak, now long

quieted. Up on Castle Crag West saw towards the end of the eighteenth century remains of a "castellum" that were later destroyed by quarrying. Here were found pieces of red and white freestone and remains of Roman pottery, and all that is certain is that it was a British hill fort, built no one knows when, but occupied at a period when Roman utensils were easily obtained. That it was still in existence in the tenth century, or afterwards, for the Norse came late to such inner dales of the Lake Country, is shown by the name the Viking folk gave to the dale. They called it "Borgar-dalr", the valley of the fort.

The British of Borrowdale, before the Norsemen came, named their river the Derwent, but the new settlers gave a name to almost everything else about the dale from the mountains down to their -thwaites and scales, their fields and huts, in the valley itself. For about two centuries the Norse held Borrowdale as they had taken it, free of all outside control, and then came the monks, an arrival that must at first have been excessively annoying to the free Borrowdale farmers.

Abbeys quarrelled about Borrowdale. In 1209 Furness Abbey bought most of Borrowdale as a sheep farm for some £156. Rather earlier Fountains Abbey had had Watendleth and Langstrath given to it. The question arose as to the ownership of Stonethwaite, and by some time after 1211 these great abbeys were fighting for the possession of what seems to us a very infertile little scrap of valley. Certainly there was a dairy farm, a "vaccary", in Stonethwaite, but the dispute, which dragged on into the early years of the next century, must surely have been as much infused with the rigour

of the game of inter-abbey squabbling as with any urgent desire for the possession of Stonethwaite. From Borrowdale the monks got, however, all sorts of things. They had a grange, at the hamlet still called "the Grainge" in 1615, where they stored their tithe corn, grown on the valley flats, and their wool. There was plenty of wood, indeed there was an iron-smelting forge at the foot of the Stake Pass to which ore was brought, probably from Eskdale by the Ure Gap, so as to utilize the ancient forests of which West saw the remains in great roots and scattered trees. Moreover, the monks made salt at that salt spring at Manesty below Grange in which Clarke, nearly five centuries later, bathed his rheumatic shoulder with such good effect. He marks this "spaw" on his map of 1785, and other writers of the same period describe, apparently, various salt springs that seem to have flowed down to the lake about here. West, who died in 1799, saw some remains of the old saltworks. The spring was still known about 1850, but ancient inhabitants of Grange say that now it has long been covered over and lost. From its property in Borrowdale, Furness Abbey drew a rental of £28 10s., a sum worth nowadays perhaps rather over £500, but the modern civil parish of Borrowdale, which, extensive though it is, includes little but fell besides the dale itself, is assessed at more than £5,000.

Under the monks Borrowdale must have been fairly populous, for in 1546, only nine years after the Abbey lands had become the property of the Crown, there were some sixteen tenants at Watendleth and twelve in Stonethwaite, while when Green wrote his guide in 1819 of twelve houses remaining at Watendleth, nine were

uninhabited, and there were but seven houses in Stonethwaite. And when the Abbey was dissolved only some thirty years went by before another great outside enterprise began to exploit Borrowdale, and the Company of Mines Royal drew the dale within the wide net of their activities. They bought woods in Borrowdale and made charcoal there; in 1569, 198½ loads of wood were cut and coaled in Borrowdale. They set up a smithy in the dale; felled and cut up the local timber; made in 1569 a path from some high-lying wood down to the valley "to bring down coal (charcoal) on horses", and established an active traffic down the lake of great boats loaded with Borrowdale stone, charcoal, boards, and ore. They also worked mines in the dale, such as the Copperplate vein above Ellers, north-west of Grange, and this was probably "that old work" in which six English miners were employed in 1600, "though with small gain," and where ore from amidst the Outcast Refuse-Stuff was "gotten by poor children towards their maintenance", a record that shows that by now not all Borrowdale folk could be supported comfortably in the dale.

It was while the Company of Mines Royal was still in being that in 1615 the tenants of Borrowdale bought the dale from the Crown. There were thirty-seven purchasers, of whom four or so seem to have been "gentlemen", and one or two resident outside the dale. Of the remainder, five of the new landowners lived in Seathwaite, eight in Seatoller, five in Rosthwaite, while others were scattered about the valley as at Thornthwaite, the Chapel, Longthwaite, Manesty, and other farms that are still in existence. So originated the Borrowdale

statesmen,[1] and though the dalesfolk must have suffered, like their neighbours, from the ruin of the home woollen industry, yet a writer in 1875 affirmed that at that time many families continued to occupy the holdings bought two hundred and sixty years before.

The activities of the Company of Mines Royal ceased some time before the middle of the seventeenth century, but Borrowdale still had mines, worked periodically; the Brandelhow lead mines, and copper mines above Manesty, and up Dale Head west of Rosthwaite. And besides these there was the famous "wad" or black-lead mine, discovered before 1600, whose tips of refuse mark the slopes of Seatoller Fell above Seathwaite. For the pure plumbago or graphite mined here very high prices were realized. Armed guards slept in a house built over the mine, and yet sometimes as many as forty little lights, moving over the mine-tips at night, showed where thieves, come up the valley from Keswick, searched with lanterns for scraps of the precious "wad". The graphite was taken to London in six-horse wagons, heavily guarded and yet, not so very long before, it had been used by the dalesfolk merely for marking their sheep and, when pounded small, as a medicine to cure their colic. After 1830 the prosperity of the mine waned, but by now quarrying was well established in the dale, and Clarke notes how useful to the poor dalesfolk were the wages earned in the "blue slate mines". Castle Crag owes its present dishevelled appearance to the quarrying that was carried on here until the work was stopped, since it threatened to destroy the crag, by Lord William

[1] A statesman is "one who owns the fee simple of his land and works on it himself."

Gordon, whose house at Water End, now Derwent Bay, near Portinscale, was being built in 1789.

Thus other resources besides farming helped the Borrowdale dalesfolk to maintain themselves on their little holdings. They wanted help, for agriculture could only be carried on under difficulties. Now that access to the dale is easy its farmers have almost given up growing crops. Some potatoes are grown, a few turnips, and occasionally a field of oats, but the arable land is now so scarce that the little patch of brown, stony ploughland at Seathwaite and similar little fields ploughed in the midst of the green flats of Rosthwaite look as unusual as the cows that occasionally are to be seen climbing, in an uncowlike manner, the fell pastures. When Gray came here in 1769 he found on October 3rd that oats and bigg (a kind of barley) were still being harvested. There is often but little sunshine in summer and the crops, late ripening as a result, are commonly enough still green when the autumn rains begin. Yet when Gray feasted at Grange the dale was still more or less self-sufficing. Writers of the late eighteenth century describe the fields of Rosthwaite as "waving" with crops, and oats were grown even at Watendleth, which is 847 feet above the sea. The greatest hardship of the dalesfolk was, according to West, bringing down their loads of peat from the mosses on the fell-tops, which they did by means of sledges guided by hand and following a kind of furrow cut out in the slopes.

Such peat roads still survive in many parts of the Lake Country, though except in one or two isolated farms, such as that of Holehouse in the vale of Duddon, the use of peat has long been abandoned.

Bad weather and isolation do not seem to have oppressed the Borrowdale folk. The choice of routes was much larger in the days when all were bad, and the dalesfolk of two or three generations ago thought nothing of going over the Stake Pass and so on to Hawkshead to sell their woollen yarn and buy spices for Christmas and return the same day, while, according to Gilpin, in 1772 women on horseback habitually made the journey up the fell from Rosthwaite to Watendleth to sell eggs and butter. This lends support, incidentally, to a conjecture that the ruined houses which Green saw later at Watendleth may have been the remains of a colony of wool-spinners too busy, perhaps, to provide themselves with the necessaries of life. That the dalesfolk were poor as regards money is shown by the tale of a "merry neet" at Rosthwaite, for "when it gat whisper't aboot 'at we'd browt a heal guinea wid us to spend, we war leuk't on an thowt summat wonderful". But that the Borrowdale dalesman must have had a light heart in his lusty body appears from many an old tale of jollity in the dale.

The old industries of Borrowdale have passed: the charcoal burning, the iron smelting, the mining, the growing of crops, the woollen manufacture, the corn mills. Timber is still got in the dale, and quarrying continues on Honister Crag. The Buttermere Green Slate Quarries give work here to some fifty men and boys from Borrowdale, and the company has built twenty houses in the dale for their employees. The Herdwick sheep remains as important to the dale as in the time when the great flocks of Rosthwaite and Watendleth, famous then as they are to-day, were preyed upon by

those eagles of Eagle Crag, above Stonethwaite, which are said to have taken a lamb a day in the nesting season. And tourists swarm, so that in holiday times the inhabitants of the dale are more than doubled. That the dalesfolk early appreciated the potential value of such visitors appears from Clarke's remark that about twenty years before his visit the people of Borrowdale had made a road quite round the lake for "the accommodation of travellers". Now, in addition to the more ordinary tourists, rock climbers have so identified themselves with Borrowdale that every crag from Castlet to Scafell is scratched by their boot-nails, every handhold noted, every solitary juniper bush upon the rocks recognized as an old friend and recorded in climbers' guides. Of all the industries the tourist one is the most welcome, for the Borrowdale tourists, a stout-legged and guileless type peculiar to these inner fastnesses of the district, leave no felled woods, no mine-tips, no heaps of quarried slate, not even litter, behind them. And in order to entice them to come it is only necessary to avoid as far as possible any blatant signs that others have been before them, for each Borrowdale tourist would fain feel he was among a very elect few in penetrating these elysian wilds.

CHAPTER III

THE GREATEST STANDING WATER

For among these mountains the greatest standing water in all England now called Winander-mere (haply of his winding and turning in and out) lieth streatched out for the space of tenne miles or there about with crooked banks and is all paved (as it were) with stone in the bothom.—WILLIAM CAMDEN.

CERTAINLY nowadays Windermere is not all paved with stone in the bottom, but Camden wrote in that happy Elizabethan age when travellers saw marvels unastonished. Marvels must indeed have been as commonplace to them as the lack of them is to us to-day. To the Elizabethan wayfarer at the Lakes all things were possible and he seems to have experienced most of them, but the modern tourist sees Windermere with quite other eyes. To the whole-hearted devotee of the inmost Lake Country Windermere is a pretty sheet of water, but set in undulations that he cannot but regard as lowland, and, besides, distressingly accessible by rail. To the day-tripper either by rail or motor Windermere is a lake beside which it is pleasant indeed to day-trip, a lake well provided with pleasure-boats, with Bowness and Lakeside and hence ice-cream carts and tea-rooms on its banks, and only 5s. away from the great centres of industrial Lancashire. To many

thousands of such, five or six thousand in a day sometimes, Windermere gives a brief glimpse in summer of the quiet shining of broad waters, the green silence of wooded slopes between whose tree-trunks shine the same shimmering levels, the far peaks about the Langdales and Rydal Head and the Kirkstone Pass withdrawn into that faint, crystal-clear, blue shadow which distance casts in the Lakeland air. Yet it is possible, indeed to the rather supercilious academic mind it seems certain, that both the day-trippers and those genteel folk who fly from them to the inner dales miss the real Windermere, fail to breathe with her wild woodland scents anything of the spirit of her winds and waters, see in the lights and shadows that shine upon and darken her silent reaches nothing of the tangled lights and shadows of her long history. Camden had the best of it: he saw with wondering. The modern visitor to Windermere, satiated with rushing about, too often neither sees nor wonders.

In any account of the Windermere district the lake itself must take precedence. The low fells that enclose it, beautiful with wood and the wide spaces of pasture as they are, are in no way remarkable in such a district. But the lake is the largest of all the lakes; moreover it stretches its great length over as much country as is compatible with its being lake rather than river. From the dawn, a late dawn here, of history, to these days of motor-boats that would fain go at eighty miles an hour, the lake has been a blessing and a nuisance, a danger and a security to the folk of its countryside, a thing to reckon with in the daily conduct of their lives. Since man began to move about its borders Windermere

Lake has been an obstacle between east and west, between Furness Fells and those not altogether inhospitable uplands that lie east of the lake, and hence between Coniston, Hawkshead, and Kendal. It has provided a route, relatively important in the days when there were no roads, between north and south. Like a great larder it has yielded food, fish, eels, wild fowl, through the centuries. It has given sanctuary in the quarrelsome days of old to knights and ladies on its largest island, to priests who sang masses for the dead in the little chantry on Saint Mary Holme, and to lepers whom they tended there. And though its usefulness is now almost gone except in so far as those that play at navigation on its waters bring a living to many a lakeside dweller, yet the lake is unchanged. While cultivation and the various other activities of man have changed its banks, a prehistoric gentleman, untimely resurrected, would joyfully behold in it a part of the landscape he knew. Like a waste moorland, an undrained fen, or the sea itself, Windermere Lake shows the same face to-day that it did before man came, and, almost exempt from his machinations, is subject as they but to the slow processes of natural change.

Windermere is still an obstacle. Sheltered, somewhat unwillingly, behind it, Hawkshead and the hamlets on or near its western margin still remain in a seclusion that is marked indeed when compared with the hectic traffic of the summer season along its eastern banks. Houses and even cottages can still be bought cheaply at Colton and Wray and Sawrey, because even to a retired off-come an approach through Newby Bridge or Ambleside, round the south or the north end of the

or Ambleside, round the south or the north end of the lake, seems to set the district just a little too far from what he regards as civilization. Only within the last few years have buses run between Hawkshead and Ambleside and, more recently still, have begun their course at Far Sawrey. Far Sawrey has a grievance. Set just over Claife Heights at the back of the Ferry hill it is at a dead end save for traffic crossing the lake, since but few motorists plunge down from the Ferry hill into that woodland lane which leads eventually to Newby Bridge. The steamer pier at Ferry Nab has fallen into ruin and no one can be found to bear the cost of its reconstruction, while the ferry which now alone carries passengers and goods across the lake here charges so highly for motor-cars that few use it, while walkers who often came over from Bowness in the little steamer *Esperance* with her crew of two "all told", seldom trouble to walk the extra distance to the ferry landing, some half a mile south of the town. Thus on a Bank Holiday, after a ramble over the lonely fells of High Furness, knowledgeable motorists take tea at the Far Sawrey hotel, secure of quietness and unspoiled rural beauty. But Far Sawrey, cut off from Bowness and the railway, is not happy, and neither are motorists who, coming to grief on one of the astonishing hills buried in the Graythwaite woods, find that succour can only come to their shattered chariot all the long miles from an Ulverston garage.

The crossing of the lake has always been an important matter to the inhabitants of the Windermere district. In 1438 or the next year it is recorded that someone paid a rental of 3d. yearly for the right to run a ferry-

boat across the lake, and in 1453–4 the tenant, for the moment, of part of the fishery in Windermere claimed to have the "ferry of the water of Windermere" included in his fishing rights. There were several recognized crossings, such as the ferry for foot passengers across the widest part of the lake between Miller Ground, north of Queen Adelaide Hill, and the opposite shore, but the main ferry seems to have been the present one, over the narrowest breadth of the lake, to The Nab south of Bowness. In 1699 it was said that this ferry had been used time out of mind and it was here that in an October storm in 1635 the "great Boat . . . sunck about sun setting, when was drowned fforty seven persons and eleven horses; ffrom sudden Death Libera nos." Like other essential public needs the ferries over Windermere were the subject of dispute—rival claimants squabbled for the rights of ferriage and when they got them for the right to carry goods as well as passengers or vice versa, while attempts to raise the toll were stoutly resisted by those who used the ferries. The weather, too, in the days when the passage was made in large rowing-boats, was often unkindly, and though the upsetting of the "great Boat" in 1635 is thought to have been partly due to overloading, yet storms, and in severe winters ice, often made the crossing dangerous or protracted. Many a timorous passenger must have felt his heart sink as he waited in the "house, shelter, harbour or coat", at the Ferry and heard the wind and water making things uncomfortable outside. Even the lake steamers have been sunk at anchor in a Windermere gale. So it has not been without pains and outcries, the clamour of wild weather and quarrelsome voices, that

the lake, all these centuries, has been crossed since the first boat, perhaps a monk's coracle, slid out upon its waters long ago. There is now but the one ferry across the lake, a great flat boat that takes walkers, carts, motor-cars, even charabancs, and when it is laid up for a week's repairs vehicles have to go round the lake. The right of working it is rented jointly by the Westmorland and Lancashire County Councils.

An obstacle to east and west travel, Windermere Lake facilitated, as already noted, that between north and south. So narrow a sheet of water was easily avoided by those who preferred the rough and wooded tracks that paralleled its banks, while its length, over ten miles of navigable water, made transport by it worth while. There was a Roman fort at its head, and it seems certain that the Romans must have used the lake for the transport to their fort of supplies, and of that freestone, broken pieces of which Ambleside housewives, in the eighteenth century, used as scouring stones. In the days before wheeled vehicles were used it was incomparably easier to carry heavy goods by water than by land. Even as late as 1683 new mill-stones for the Rydal corn mill, that had been brought up Windermere in the great boat that belonged to the Braithwaite family of Ambleside Hall, were only with the greatest difficulty carried on to Rydal, one upon a "Dragg", one upon a "Trail with a pair of Wheels". They do not seem to have been taken by any of the so-called roads but simply dragged across marsh and streams and country-side, breaking down walls as they went, to the mill. So important was the lake as a means of transit that one of the earliest known references to Windermere concerns the rights of

A STORM ON WINDERMERE

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navigation and fishing on its waters. About the beginning of the thirteenth century, when all this region was still a wooded wilderness, largely unexplored, the monks of Furness Abbey and the barons of Kendal each claimed the right to use the great lake. The monks, whose land came down to the western shores, adventured forth from their woodlands and fished "furtively" from boats that the Kendal baron of the moment subsequently seized. However, in 1240 another Kendal baron gave to the Abbey permission to use one boat on the lake for the carrying of timber and other building materials, so that by now the value of the waterway must have been recognized. The priests of the chantry founded on the little island of "Saynmariholm" in the middle of the thirteenth century were also allowed a boat to carry timber and about the same time the building of the manor house of the de Lindesays on the big island then known as Holme Island, and now as Belle Isle, must have led to a busy traffic of building materials across the water. There are references later to "the wood within the island of Windermere". Apparently pigs were run in the wood, and later still, in 1446, a description of a "parcel of waste land called Windermere Holme" seems to show that by then the wood had been cut down. So pigs and timber were then everyday cargoes on the lake as well as building-stone, while the priests on St. Mary Holme must have rowed daily between their chantry and the lands they cultivated on the mainland at Calgarth with, in their proper season, loads of corn, and firewood, and the produce of the cattle they were allowed to graze on the pastures of Applethwaite. Later, as the population of the district

increased so did trade on the lake, and Bowness became a port. The church of St. Martin's here is thought to have been built late in the twelfth century: the grammar school was founded about 1637, and Bowness Bay acted as harbour for quite a fleet of lake vessels, which landed fish and charcoal here. Some way south on the opposite shore there was a boat-landing in connection with the iron forge at Cunsey, and in the eighteenth century slates from Langdale were sent by boat from the quay at Clappersgate right down the lake to Newby Bridge. Barges with "spreading sails" carried limestone up the lake for the fields of Rydal and the rough-casting of houses, and the traffic in goods of all kinds was of such importance that the right of sole ferriage up and down the lake, claimed by one George Braithwaite in 1726, was a coveted possession.

After goods cargoes came tourists. The improvement of the roads along the lake and the advent of railways, to the village now known as Windermere in 1847 and to Lakeside in 1869, made the slow and sometimes dangerous carriage of goods by water unnecessary. At the same time tourists began to drift in along the new lines of communication, and traffic on the lake, from being almost purely commercial and practical, became of that elegant character suited to the artistic views of the visitors. About 1836 a regular passenger service of two large rowing-boats began to run the length of the lake, a service designed to be a "great accommodation to visitors", and in 1845, fourteen years earlier than on Coniston, steamers first broke, with strange snortings and smokings, the quiet of the waters.

Now the traffic on the lake is of more importance

than it has ever been, but of that kind of indirect importance that brings no longer necessities, but the money to buy them, to Windermere folk. Visitors so throng the lake that its floating population on a fine August day must equal that of a considerable village.

And since the war have come motor-boats, a source of dispute in the neighbourhood between those who dislike their noise and the speed of their passage and those who see in their popularity and in the races run by the Windermere Motor-Boat Club an additional attraction to the district. However one may feel about boats that, like those belonging to Miss Carstairs which ran trials on the lake recently, may roar up the lake at nearly eighty miles an hour, visible but as a streak of white foam, it is indisputable that they maintain a local industry in a neighbourhood which badly needs such. The boatmen who hire out the pleasure-boats in summer turn in winter to work in the boat-building yards of Bowness. For years yachts, rowing-boats, ships' lifeboats and such craft have been built in Bowness and sent as far afield as Rio de Janeiro, Hoylake, the Mersey, and elsewhere, and now motor-boats are built as well.

Besides bearing their loads and resting, on its broad waters, their travel-wearied feet, the great lake, as already noted, gave food to the folk of its country-side. From very early days the fisheries of Windermere have been valuable. Since the monks, in the thirteenth century, fished, with stealth and guile, in the baron of Kendal's waters, the rights of fishing on the lake have been sought after, quarrelled for, and so vigorously exploited that at the last, hard hit as well by oil pollution

and those various ills that beset the world of modern fish, they have come to be of little practical value. When the country was a wilderness of wood, domestic animals—except pigs—very few, and religion, besides, found virtue in a fish diet, the fish of the Lake District bulked large in the life of their neighbours on land. Spotted, as the eighteenth century writers would say, with lakes, and threaded by innumerable streams, the Lake Country was interpenetrated by a watery world, full of a life of its own as remote from man as the life of angels, and with fish in it from the lakes almost up to the tops of the mountains. In early days the waters ranked more or less with the land as productive areas. Streams, and lakes, and portions of lakes, were rented from the lord of the manor and exploited by the tenants with as much thoroughness as the land was cultivated, and vast quantities of fish were caught. Thus in 1682 Sir Daniel Fleming assembled a company of friends to witness the drawing to shore of a great net-full of fish from Rydal Lake.

In 1240 the monks of Furness Abbey were granted the right to one boat, using twenty nets, for fishing on Windermere, and in 1324 the fishing in the lake was worth forty shillings yearly to that Ingelram de Gynes who held the mansion house, then in a state of decay, on the island called the Holme. Henry VI, who held land in the parish of Windermere, granted fishing rights on Windermere to various favoured subjects, and it was in his reign that a cloth-mill that had been built near the ancient and now vanished chapel at Troutbeck was pulled down lest it should so pollute the waters of the Troutbeck as to damage the fisheries in the lake.

The fishery of the lake was divided into various parts, some belonging to the king while some belonged to neighbouring landowners. In the time of Elizabeth, Camden wrote that all the fishing in Windermere then belonged to Applethwaite in the parish of Windermere, while the rector was allowed so much a boat in lieu of tithe fish. When Gilpin made his tour of the Lakes about 1772 the lake was then divided into five fishing districts of nearly equal area, but in 1819 Green wrote that there were but three such "cables", "cubbles", or "cubles", as the fishing districts were known, on the lake, for which their several owners paid a rent of £6 to the king's receiver. Each of these main fishing districts seems to have been subdivided into a number of smaller fisheries, separated by invisible but well recognized lines, and as the shoals of char, stirring from their summer retirement in the cool depths of the lake, began to appear in autumn and wander, as a rule, northwards up the lake, so fortune came to some fishers while others, their fishing area avoided by the travelling clouds of fish, were left lamenting.

The history of the Windermere fisheries is, to the non-historian, full of obscurity; sunk in the depths of ancient manuscripts, complicated by questions of ownership and inheritance, and altogether baffling. But even he can gather, from the labours of the learned, something of the importance in earlier days of that store of char and trout, eels and pike and perch, harboured by the lake. Of recent years the Windermere char fishing has almost become extinct: experimental nettings made in 1928 secured only sixteen or twenty fish. But in the spring of 1929 there was a surprising

revival in this sport and a good stock of char was found in both the upper and lower parts of the lake. However, in Windermere pike eat the trout; the trout eat each other; eels eat their spawn and cormorants and black-headed gulls eat all they can get. Vast swarms of under-fed, undersized perch encumber the water. Anglers say that the streams entering the lake are polluted and bring down rubbish which makes netting difficult. And they also say that the fishing is now, as a rule, so bad as to be unworthy of an angler's serious consideration. But visitors love it; the Bowness boatmen practically live on the local perch-fishing, and some six or seven local residents rent fisheries even yet. As in the case of traffic on the lake its fisheries have passed from the stage of practical use to that of supplying amusement, and it is probable that just as there are now more boats on the lake than ever before, that so there are more fishers, catching one where the old dalesman netted a hundred, but tasting with that one the rigour of the game as keenly as he with his boatload.

In these orderly days islands, the refuge of the hunted, have lost half their charm, and yet there is still some-thing strangely pleasant in landing on an uninhabited island. Islands must satisfy some unsuspected longing for security handed down to us from our more warlike forbears. There are fourteen of them on Windermere. Of the chantry on Saint Mary Holme nothing remains, though Wordsworth saw fragments of it. A narrow strip of lake water seems nowadays but poor protection against such robust animosities as those of the Middle Ages, but on the Holme, or Longholme, the de Lindesays felt it worth while, as already noted, to build their

thirteenth-century manor house. Later on the famous Philipson family of Calgarth Hall owned the Holme, stored their treasure there, it is said, and one of them withstood a siege of eight or ten days by the Parliamentarian troops. But there came a time at last when the "many elegant villas" that West's editor noted in 1799 began to grow up about the shores of Windermere. The old pele of the Philipsons was pulled down in 1774 and in its place arose that round house of to-day which, with its formal gardens, aroused the fearful wrath of the earlier writers on Lake Country scenery. The islands on Derwentwater also played their part in history. Lord's Island, where stood the probably sixteenth or seventeenth century manor house of the de Derwentwaters, has, unlike the Holme, lapsed back into wilderness. The stones of the house were carried away, some to build the old town hall of Keswick, and the wooden bridge between the island and Stable Hills, where the family's horses were kept, is gone, too, though part of its abutment was visible in 1819. Of the cell of Saint Herbert nothing remains on his little island in Derwentwater. The island is said to have been used as a storehouse for ammunition in the Civil War, and Sir Wilfrid Lawson of Isel built on it a little pleasure-house, now also almost entirely vanished. On Derwent or Vicar's Island, which had been known as Hest (or horse) Holme in the time of Richard I, the German miners of Elizabethan Keswick carried on all kinds of business. They cleared and cultivated part of the island, pastured upon it horses and pigs, and there had a brewhouse, a windmill, a pigeon-house, garden and orchard, and a drying-floor for corn. And a hundred years later the island was but

a "pasture ground with a little ruinous house", which it remained till, in 1779, the present house was built upon it.

In Coniston Water the remains of mysterious buildings have been found on the little Peel Island, foundations, it is thought, of a robber stronghold, as well as remains of a mediæval iron-smelting forge; even on the solitary island in Grasmere sheep were pastured and a substantial barn built, while Rydal's tree-grown islet once harboured a colony of herons.

All this island history at the Lakes goes to show how values have changed: prized for their security, exploited for their wood and pasture and arable land (there were said to be six acres of cornland on Vicar's Island in 1767) as if every square inch of ground must be utilized, the Lake Country islands are now of importance only in so far as they give pleasure to tourists and to those of their owners to whom an island life appeals. Even the herons are long flown away from Rydal.

Through the centuries that have left the "greatest standing water" apparently unchanged the country-side about it has passed from wilderness unbroken to its present state, has been submitted to the labours of generation after generation, and, so submitted, has altered as a landscape alters in a day of wind and cloud and sunshine. Prehistoric people have left graves and weapons and earthworks on the fell country about the lake. The Romans, as already noted, had a fort at Waterhead and roads to it from Watercrook below Kendal and from the west over Hardknott and Wrynose passes, while a road struck off from Troutbeck and ran along the top of High Street. After the Romans,

long after, in that time of which there is here no history, came the Norse folk. They did not make history either. There is no record of their coming and only the names of places where they lived tell of their gradual settlement of the region. On the eastern fells at Staveley, and up Kentmere, and at Crook, Norse farmers made a living in the wilderness. The name of Orrest Head ("orresta" means battle) records some forgotten conflict. A Norseman claimed the great lake as his, for the name Windermere is now thought to have been Vinund's mere. They were Norse settlers who, almost certainly, founded Ambleside, the saetr or satter of Amal, and there were Norse all over Furness Fells on the west of the lake, as was natural if they came from the sea-coast and their colonies in the Isle of Man. At Finsthwaite, Sawrey, Rusland, Hawkshead, Satterthwaite, were Norse, a pioneer people who have passed like the ancient forests, but, like them, left behind what came to be the very foundation of the later Lake Country life.

Then through the Middle Ages the Windermere country-side passed through those vicissitudes, pleasant and uncomfortable, prosperous and the reverse, whose history will be expounded more fully for the Rothay valley. Iron smelting and charcoal burning; the dreadful advent of the plague; woodland industries; the fear of the Scots; the working of many cloth-mills like the vanished mill on the Wanlas Beck in Applethwaite and that at Millerground; the cloth and corn mill at Troutbeck Bridge that later became successively a paper-mill, a flax-mill, a bobbin-mill, and is now an electrical works and wood-working mill; the gradual extinction of the prosperous home industries of spinning and weaving;

the slow, painful, banishment of the statesmen from the little farms that they had held on an almost freehold tenure from time immemorial; all these played their part in determining the Windermere country-side of to-day. And now it has become primarily a playground. Strangers buy its lands and build residences, catch its fish, consume the scanty agricultural produce of its remaining farms, employ its young manhood and womanhood about garden, house, and car, and so maintain the whole neighbourhood that their withdrawal would mean ruin. And yet over the visitors' heads on some crowded Easter Monday the late snows on Bowfell and Crinkle Crags look down into the calm waters of the lake and there see themselves, crags untroubled by man and his works, waters as unchanging, and it is they, old as the Lake Country, who will see, if anyone does, the end of things at Windermere.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROTHAY VALLEY: THREE LAKELAND VILLAGES

Which Estates are verie small, and the soile thereof for the most part verie barran: yet by reason they trade in making coarse clothes, they are the better enabled to live and their houses better builded, but not by goodness of their tenements.—*From a petition of the customary tenants of the barony of Kendal*, 1619

THIS is to be a solemn chapter, inconveniently crowded with historical details, weighted with the burden of mountain folk. There is such a burden on those who live in all the mountain regions in our island climate. The unfruitful country-side imposes a limit on the fruitfulness of man that is never observed. Mountain man, gallant fighter against odds, founds a family as surely as his brother in the plains, but a family that lives less well on his few and barren acres than did he and his wife. Very soon there comes a time when the land can no longer support its constantly increasing population. Mountain dwellers are proverbially slow to leave the old home among the fells, though there has been, and still is, a small but persistent exodus from the Lake Country, and hence life in these dales has, since early days, been perforce in large part artificially

maintained from without and thus subject to extreme fluctuations of prosperity and comfort.

An intermittent kind of tragedy hangs then over mountain regions, and its shadow has not been withheld from that valley of the Rothay which runs down to the head of Windermere from the Cumbrian border. Yet it is a valley so lovely that it seems an outrage that any gloom beyond that of its cloud shadows should darken the shining waters of Grasmere and Rydal lakes, that any grief should sound there besides the wind crying through the pines on Rydal Old Hall hill.

It is a delicate loveliness, this of the Rothay valley, and though there is no part of the Lake Country more thronged with visitors in summer it is possible that some of them feel a little disappointed. Conscious of a lack of literary recollections within them at all worthy of responding to those without, and a little dashed by the absence of very large mountains and beetling crags, tourists sometimes think, guiltily, that Grasmere has been perhaps overrated. They do not know what they have missed. In the Rothay valley the weather and the seasons, the moving sun, the cloud and mountain shadows, invest the country-side with a delicate enchantment as essentially a part of it as the bloom is part of a grape. Tourists see all these things when they are at their least interesting. Easter visitors, if they are lucky, may come in for the daffodils, the little wild Lent lilies, that climb the slopes at Rydal and lie like moonlight in a green hollow below Helm Crag. Whitsuntide tourists may see the bluebells that cover the slopes beneath the Loughrigg terrace walk and, like a violet haze, lie in the woods beside Grasmere. But never a holiday-maker

sees that strange twilight, clear and dark as shadowed water, that soon after two on a winter afternoon fills the hollow of Rydal, while above, behind the dark edges of Loughrigg and Red Bank, sunset brightens and fades in the mysterious, protracted way of mountain sunsets. No tourist watches a November dawn when a red-gold light, vivid as flame, sinks lower and lower down Silverhow and the Easedale fells; lies in a golden breadth on the snows of Seat Sandal; broadens slowly across the valley from the west until the shadows of the Butterlip How oaks may be watched moving, each edged with a yet unmelted rim of hoar-frost, on the ground, and may be felt moving, like slanting breadths of a chill gloom, in the sunlit, hazy air. Few tourists know the valley well enough to trace the paths, those immemorial paths, of the mountain shadows that in sunny weather broaden and shrink and broaden again on the fell slopes as the days and the seasons go by; the shadow of Loughrigg that in winter never lifts from the lower end of Grasmere; the shadows of Fairfield and Seat Sandal that, morning and evening, spread across Tongue Gill, from south to north and north to south, until at midsummer the setting sun shines across the northern slopes of Seat Sandal and strangely lights the bare north-western steeps of Fairfield; the great gulf of shadow that Helm Crag casts at sunset, further and further down the valley, as the new year draws on.

These, and other things, are withheld from tourists. So also, from most of them, is hidden all that concerns the growth of the Rothay valley from a wilderness to what it is to-day.

There are in the Lake Country, as will be noted later,

very many scattered farms, many hamlets, some few villages, fewer little towns. Yet here along the short course of the Rothay are three settlements, two of them little towns and one a village, and all, for the Lake Country, ancient. Before man came seeking a living from its virgin land this valley was but swamp and forest, water and rock; the hollow of Grasmere separated by a gorge from Rydal Water in its smaller basin and this again separated by a gorge from the lower valley that runs down to Windermere. The fell slopes that enclosed it were steep and rocky, its scanty areas of flat land waterlogged. Even now, in spite of centuries of land drainage, the three lakes are, after heavy rain, almost joined by great sheets of flood-water, a reminder of those early days when the rain and the becks between them kept this hollow in the fells stirred into a quaking softness, half water, half peat, wholly intractable. The earliest inhabitants of all came and went and the forest closed over them as the marshes at Waterhead have closed over the Roman causeways. It is not until the thirteenth century that mention is found of those places in the valley which became at last village settlements, and at this time the district, still covered with its native woods, was used by Norman nobles as a hunting-ground and for the pasturage of their pigs.

The earliest known reference to Grasmere is one of 1246. By 1254 there was a church there, which was the only church for the large parish of Grasmere. This parish extended from Dunmail Raise to the Stock Beck that, later, cut the little town of Ambleside in half, and from Kirkstone Pass to the head of Great Langdale, so that until comparatively recent days people from

Great and Little Langdale, Loughrigg and Rydal and part of Ambleside had to make their way by fell tracks, through "the heat in summer and the great snows and sudden inundations of water in winter" to Grasmere church for their buryings and marryings and worship. In 1283 Grasmere was possessed of meadow in demesne, a fishery, sheep farms, a corn and a cloth mill, breweries, a forge, and a shop. Enclosures were made from the lower fell slopes and rent paid to the manor for these "intakes" by 1375.

Lower down the valley in 1277 one Roger de Lancaster, who owned the deer forest of Rydal, enclosed it to avoid the trespassing within it of cattle belonging to farmers who lived beyond his boundaries. Thus the country about Rydal was by then inhabited and he himself had some kind of a hunting-lodge here, referred to in old documents as "Roger loge". By the fifteenth century some of the families who afterwards became famous in the annals of Rydal village were already established there. As for Ambleside, its name first appears as "the park of Amelsate" in 1275, but by early in the succeeding century it had become a little hamlet with eleven tenants and a corn-mill.

Things were not altogether easy for these early settlers in the Rothay valley. Their fundamental difficulty was a scarcity of arable land. The river flats alone afforded any extent of soil flat and deep enough for cultivation, and they must have been useless until they were drained. The sites of the early settlements are indeed a commentary on the marshiness of the valley bottom. The hamlet of Ambleside was set high above those mosses of the Rothay that stretched down to Waterhead and

in which the tenants had their peat rights. The Rydal houses stood on the hill-side, on a slope so rocky that in later days the squires of Rydal used much gunpowder in tidying up their village and blasting out of the way all sorts of jutting rocks that an earlier generation had meekly incorporated with its house-walls and gardens and avoided by its winding tracks. And the old hall of Rydal, that forgotten manor house that was finally demolished about 1657, stood on the top of a rocky knoll on the west of the road from Ambleside and, so standing, was lifted above the marshes that then surrounded it. Further up the valley the old houses of Grasmere, so scattered that the village came to consist of a collection of tiny hamlets, stood nearly all of them on the fell slopes about the dale bottom, though the present church, and possibly some manorial buildings, grew up on the flats at the head of the lake and were known as Churchtown or Kirktown. The rectory and the tithe-barn, that is now transformed into the Parish Room, were in the early days surrounded by marsh, and the old names of the various enclosures of the bottom lands at Grasmere testify to their more or less waterlogged condition, names such as Mire, Foul Mires, Moss, Wet Parrock, Peatmoss field.

The old lines of travel show also how the river flats were avoided. The way north from Ambleside branched from the Kirkstone road and followed as a pack-horse track the slopes of Rydal Park, and though there was a route through the Low Park and past Old Hall hill it was marshy; there was a dangerous morass where the Rydal Beck joined the Rothay and below this was a dreaded ford. Before the turnpike road was made

PLOUGHING ON THE FELLS ABOVE RYDAL

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here Ambleside schoolchildren were set to make a causeway across the boggy flats between their own village and Rydal. From Rydal the track to Grasmere followed the present path that starts from below Rydal Mount and runs high along the slopes of Nab Scar to the top of White Moss, and from there an old road continued along the hill-side, past a line of farms, now mostly vanished or incorporated into modern residences, and so reached Dunmail Raise without descending into the valley bottom. The grassy windings of another old road that ran along the lower slopes of Helm Crag and Steel Fell can still be seen across the Raise Beck from the present main road to Keswick.

Besides these wet river-flats, avoided alike by houses and by trackways, there was but little ground that could be ploughed. Yet plough-land was a necessity in the days when foodstuffs could not be obtained from outside and, since it was so limited, the settlements that depended on it were necessarily small. In the fourteenth century a full holding consisted of some six acres at Ambleside; later at Rydal it seems to have included about ten acres. Added to these holdings of valley lands were the rights of pasturage on the fells, usually for a limited number of beasts only. On these little farms the dalesfolk grew oats and barley, hemp, flax, a little fruit, and from their fell grazings and their share of the common hayfields came meat, and milk, and wool, and skins for leather. Very little wheat was grown, indeed the millstones in the Rydal corn-mill were of a type unfitted for grinding wheat, and bread consisted of oatmeal or barley cakes. To the large amount of oatmeal eaten and to the local scarcity of

green vegetables has been attributed the various troubles in his interior from which the Lake Country farmer suffered rather commonly in these far-off days. Besides what they produced on their holdings the tenants in the Rothay valley had peat cut from their allotted shares in some peat-moss and also certain well-defined but limited rights to timber and firewood, but the fisheries were preserved.

So, helped by surprisingly few implements, as is shown by old inventories of household possessions, these early farmers along the Rothay managed at first to draw from the rough country-side a comfortable living. But the weather was against them; it would in fact be difficult to name any agricultural product that is at its happiest in Lake Country weather; the hilly, marshy country-side was against them; sometimes also they were taxed beyond all reason. Life became increasingly difficult for each succeeding generation. And then help came from without. England beyond the fells began to demand the coarse Kendal cloth woven in the dales of the district, and in quick response mills multiplied. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth century there were no less than eighteen such cloth-mills in the parish of Grasmere. The sites of most of these are lost. Seven were dotted about in the vale of Grasmere, one at the foot of Sour Milk Gill up Easedale, one probably on Greenhead Gill, another perhaps near the branching of the Keswick and Grasmere roads at the southern entrance to the village. There was one, and a dwelling-house, on the Rothay near where it leaves Grasmere, one or two on the river below Rydal Water, many scattered about the little mountain mass of Loughrigg,

one at Scandale Bridge, probably one near Miller Bridge on the Rothay near Ambleside, and several on the Stock Beck in that little town.

The trade in cloth brought riches to some of the old statesmen families, such as the Bensons of Loughrigg and those Braithwaites of Ambleside Hall whose little bridge house, leading once to their orchard below the Stock Beck, is now the property of the National Trust. It brought, if not riches, a degree of comfort to those who remained small farmers, and it maintained on their little holdings bigger households than the farm output would have sufficed for. Food-stuffs had now to be imported into the valley from outside, and to meet the increased demand queer, steep, infertile little patches of land were brought into some sort of cultivation, traces of which may still be detected in places. So even wheat was grown where now coppice woods cover the slopes of the ancient little freeholding of Bainriggs between the Rothay and White Moss: the lower slopes of Loughrigg beside Rydal Lake were ploughed, relatively sunless though they are; in 1683 five "parcels" of corn ground belonged at Grasmere to one tenement alone, the Wray; and up Easedale may be seen to-day the lines of field drains visible as an elaborate network of scarcely perceptible ridges over what is now but sterile, rocky pasture.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, however, the trade in Lake Country cloth began to decline. It never revived, and though the dalesfolk continued to engage in various handicrafts connected with wool—as late as 1801 twenty-four thousand pairs of hand-knitted stockings were dealt with weekly at Kendal market—

the Rothay valley, overpopulated, with every available patch of cultivable land already in use, fell on evil days. By 1600 Rydal village had already begun to decay. The statesmen there had been unable, owing to the restrictions of their tenancy, to engage to any extent in the cloth trade. Their ancient rights of pasturage on the fells of Grasmere Common were taken by the lord of the manor; their arable lands were very small, though they probably reached as far up the steep slope as the top house of the village; many of the original holdings had been subdivided, as families grew up, into smaller ones still. Compelled to maintain themselves from areas of land quite inadequate in a country so rough of surface and harsh in climate, they engaged upon many activities beyond those of agriculture and acted as carriers, wallers, woodworkers, mill-hands, charcoal burners, weavers, and handy men (and women) about the manorial estate. Yet all was of no avail, and during succeeding years the Rydal tenants, burdened by debt, defeated in their gallant struggle to win a living from their little holdings, were ruined. One by one their ancestral homesteads passed out of their hands and their names from the manorial registers. By about 1800 only some six of the thirteen or fourteen Rydal homesteads were in a state of good repair.

So passed the mediæval Rydal, the victim of a restricted area. Grasmere fared somewhat better. Here was a wide basin with extensive valley flats, available, once they were drained, for the growth of crops; here also were unrestricted areas of common grazing on the fells. The population grew. The church was enlarged to nearly double its width before 1562, though the benches

of those days held many more worshippers than do the modern seats, the old north wall being left to form a central wall between the pews. By 1598 Grasmere was trying to get the right to hold a weekly market, and many of her farm holdings were occupied by prosperous cloth-traders. But the market was not granted to Grasmere, and in the general collapse of prosperity that followed the passing of the cloth trade it suffered inevitably. Solitary barns, fragments of walling, or tradition alone, now mark the site of vanished homesteads along the line of the old track from White Moss to the Raise, up Far Easedale, and at "t'back o' t'lake."

Enclosure of the common lands set the farmers to cultivating the walled intakes in the first half of the nineteenth century; lime was brought from far away to sweeten the reclaimed land, crops were grown and old writers remark on the cornfields of Grasmere. But such a mountain hollow was at best on the margin of cultivation. When English agriculture suffered an eclipse after about 1876 it was no longer worth while to coax crops from its stony, rain-swept lands, and intakes relapsed back into waste.

So, after Rydal, the shadow fell, only less darkly, on Grasmere. It fell also on Ambleside, but less directly, more as the shadow of a shadow, for Ambleside had by then found a more or less permanent way of escape from entire dependence on what the weather and the country-side between them chose to yield in crops and meat and wool. Grasmere and Rydal both lay on a great through route, and to and fro along their valley must have passed, since before history began, such shifting currents of travel and trade as the fell country

engendered. But Ambleside alone was set where easy routes from east and west as well as from north and south met and crossed each other, and the rise of Ambleside out of the tangled wilderness of the Norman deer forest is closely associated with the slow definition and emergence from swamp and forest and bare fell-side of the pack-horse tracks.

At first Ambleside, like Grasmere and Rydal, was simply the place where a few farmers lived together, partly by reason of the forest that then enclosed their little clearing, partly because it was a comfortable spot to live in, dry and sunny, partly because they then managed their affairs and their land in common. By the end of the fourteenth century there were twenty-eight customary tenants in Ambleside. But even now the days of their seclusion were over. The water-power of the Stock Beck was used to turn the wheels of an increasing number of cloth and corn mills, wood and bark mills, that must at last have been crowded together below Stock Gill Force. Brewing and tanning industries grew up. The hamlet became a village, and in spite of restrictions owing to its being surrounded till Tudor times by a deer forest, a centre for the immediately surrounding country. Yet, in spite of these activities, typical of a little country town, the village remained primarily one of farmers, who managed their affairs by means of a series of regulations very similar to those of other Lake Country communities, and so elaborate that it seems cause for quarrelling, and opportunities of annoying one's neighbour must have been distressingly common. There were rules regarding forest rights, peat and fishery rights, the maintenance of hedges and gates,

the management of the common hay-meadows, the use of the common pasture. Beasts were to be driven only by certain recognized "rakes" or else the person across whose land they were driven was liable, very naturally, to make a Hubleshow, which seems to have been the Middle Ages equivalent for a row. No man was to take another man's ash leaves, for the ash, green far into the autumn, was used for winter fodder in these days before the turnip came to gladden the heart of stock-farmers. No man was to keep his kine about his farmstead from mid-May till Michaelmas, the months when they were turned out on to the common pasture above the village. No man was to shear grass in other men's ground, or to make a coalpit in the forest. There were, in fact, a great many things that no man might do, and since no doubt he frequently wanted to, and did them, the villagers must have been spared from dullness. There is record indeed of one Mackereth trying to drive his cattle across the land of the widow Fisher, "forceably and Riotously". Elizabeth, the Fisher daughter, opposed the transit, and in the ensuing battle she was "Bruised and her arms made Bloody". So in work and quarrelling, neighbourliness and malice, the people of Ambleside made a good show of struggling together against the contrariness of their little world, and by the end of the sixteenth century, by which time Ambleside folk, forty-five landholders and fifteen landless householders, found themselves able to afford an ordained minister for their chapel, a network of tracks must have covered the country-side and made it far more generally accessible than do the few, good roads of to-day.

By now Ambleside was definitely drawing ahead of

her two sister communities in the Rothay valley. In 1650 she obtained the weekly wool market that Grasmere had vainly petitioned for some fifty years earlier. Her rental value was nearly twice that of Grasmere, nearly three times as great as that of Rydal and Loughrigg together, and, as to population, in 1690 Ambleside paid a poll tax of over twelve pounds, while the whole of Grasmere, Langdale, Loughrigg, and Rydal paid but £10 10s. Whereas Grasmere and Rydal had, as a rule, no more than one shop apiece, Ambleside was become something of a shopping centre and the squires of Rydal bought wine, and wheaten bread, groceries and meat and brown friezed cloth there, while pack-horses bringing their purchases from all over the country plodded into Ambleside from Hawkshead and Furness, from Windermere, from Ravenglass by Hardknott and Wrynose, from the north by Kirkstone and Grasmere, from the east by Kendal and Troutbeck Bridge. Outward bound they carried char pies from Rydal Hall—vast masses of pastry and potted char, weighing sometimes over eighty pounds apiece—to the squire's friends in London and elsewhere. The little town had now a resident surgeon of its own, a paper-mill, several inns, as became a centre of travel, tailors, saddlers, and the like.

However, as market town and shopping centre Ambleside suffered in common with the declining prosperity of the small tenant farmers round about it, while the farm holdings of its own townsfolk were, as elsewhere, broken up, or amalgamated together by buyers who had got rich in trade. By 1675 only four holdings of the original full size remained. With the decline of the cloth and wool trade gradually passed much of the

commercial activity of the little town. At last the wool market closed in 1825 and Ambleside sank into a kind of suspended animation, a period of adjustment to its decreased resources, from which it was not to be stirred until the first tourists came.

Thus all along the Rothay valley, at which tourists (and all of us off-comes have been tourists here) stare as at a show and with that faintly patronizing manner which comes from a subconscious realization that they are paying for the show, the little communities of dalesfolk had their ups and downs; their struggles, hard but stimulating, for a livelihood; their bursts of prosperity. Which alternations, like those of other country-sides, will no doubt persist as long as man and the Rothay valley continue to interact upon each other.

CHAPTER V

GREAT LANGDALE AND A SHEPHERDS' MEET

> . . . the clouds,
> The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,
> Motions of moonlight, all come thither.
>
> WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

INTO the shallow head of Windermere flows a broad and tranquil water known as Birdhouse Mouth. The rivers Rothay and Brathay unite at Clappersgate to form it, and from it, up into the mountains, run back its wild tributary valleys as far as Wrynose, Rossett Gill, and Dunmail Raise. Up the Rothay go the Windermere trout, and up the Brathay the Windermere char, into those mountain recesses of Langdale that seem so entirely suited to such a lover of water, cold as the hill shadows, as is the char.

To pass from the October woods about Skelwith and Elterwater, where even the river mists seem to glow with a tawny colour, on into the head of Great Langdale is to pass from autumn incarnate into a mountain hollow where the seasons are met with an almost unchanging austerity. The forest of Langdale, for the herbage in which a rent of 50s. was paid in the thirteenth century, has vanished, and the oaks and sycamores scattered along the Great Langdale Beck and sheltering

the farms at the head of the dale are too few, even in a windless, full-leaved October, sensibly to lighten the lucent gravity of hue with which the bare fells and crags seem to endue the air. Even in sunshine Langdale is grave. There is no lake to catch the light. The reedy pastures of the dale bottom and the fading greens and russets of the fell slopes even in the autumn sunlight retain a mountain wildness, an aloofness, which makes them seem one with that mountain silence that fills the hollow.

Langdale is no hidden valley. Down into Little Langdale came the Roman road over Wrynose that was, centuries later, the last noted pack-horse track to be used in the Lake Country. The Pikes proclaim Langdale far afield. Across Morecambe Bay, from north of Lancaster, from above Kendal, from the shores of Windermere and the climbing lengths of the Kirkstone road, they lift their unmistakable shapes out of a sea of hills, familiar, well-loved shapes, so that tourists returning every year to a Lakeland holiday cry, "There are the Pikes!" with a quite immense satisfaction. Motor-buses run up Great Langdale all the year round; horse charabancs make daily in summer the round by Little Langdale and Blea Tarn to the dale. Yet it remains almost untouched by modern changes. There is, indeed, a new road up it, but it is a pleasant road, winding along the base of the northern slopes, and almost following the line of a very old road that still links together the farms that are set along here, old farms that face south and, lifted well above the valley flats, stare into the great hollow of the head of the dale. The humpbacked little bridges that formerly made motoring at

the head of the dale so entertaining are not destroyed, though the new road, with the modern dislike of adventure, discreetly avoids them. There are some huts belonging to a Holiday Association tucked away beside Wall End farm, but they are almost invisible, and the one house built in the dale since the war is, like the new road, most discreet. It stands above the Old Dungeon Gill Hotel, backed by a grove of thin and wind-swept trees, and looks like an old white farm-house.

Thus, out of the season, it is still possible to feel very remote in Langdale, remote and very small. For in the great hollow at its head, down into which look Bowfell and Crinkle Crags and Pike o' Stickle and the rest, the weather walks incarnate, and takes to itself shape and substance. When the first snow shower of October begins to drift over Pike o' Stickle in a pale transparent blur, moving in the windless afternoon with a curious semblance of life, it seems nebulous as mist creeping about the great crags. But, still in the windless and most utter silence, it sinks lower and lower, grows paler and less transparent, broadens to a white obscurity, and begins its soundless march across the dale, white and dense as cloud, joining the whitening earth to the pale low sky. On either side of its misty edges the fells still assert their solid bulk in the grey light of coming dusk, but from the dale the only real thing left in the world seems this slow marching, slow sinking, cloud of snow in which the fells are blotted out or fade to a blurred shadow.

It is the same with wind. When from the west low clouds drive fast and ceaselessly above the dale, the stillness in its great hollow seems unreal. A puff of curiously warm air comes now and then, and sets the

GREAT LANGDALE

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dry leaves astir above the Langdale Beck, but otherwise there is no sound but the even murmur of the water, no motion but its quiet flow. All movement and life and purpose seem lifted above the dale, and as the hurrying clouds, bulging low, take on that faint warmth of colouring that comes from the hidden sunset and leaves the land untouched, the dale seems, in its eerie and shadowed stillness, a thing forgotten, forlorn.

Nowhere, perhaps, does sunshine seem so much a thing of substance as in Langdale when, through a roof of slow moving and loosely packed cloud, great shafts of it slant down into the dale and march solemnly athwart it, where each meets the earth a space of vague and misty light that, as it moves over trees and walls and pastures, makes them seem far more unearthly than the pillar of sunlight above them. And in rain, real rain, this mountain hollow so loses its identity that it might be part of a plain; the fells are gone in cloud and mist, and the dale they now invisibly enclose becomes to any wanderer but a stretch of drenched flats, grey-green levels, lost in rain on every side, and so hollow and spongy underfoot that they seem less solid than the descending sheets of rain-water.

Moreover, in Great Langdale the weather is almost immediately reflected, in terms of human comfort and discomfort, in the dale. Perhaps things were more comfortable in the days of the "forest of Langdale", but now rain runs straight off the steep bare slopes of Lingmoor and Crinkle Crags, Bowfell, and the Pikes, and lies in sheets of pale flood-water in the dale, so that the vanished lake, of which geologists write, reappears at intervals like a ghost. Before the new road was made

these floods, which periodically drowned the road along the valley bottom, caused much hardship and inconvenience to the dalesfolk. Now the bottom road is abandoned, and within a week or two of its desertion it lay among the reedy pastures, cut up with flood channels, strewn with wrack and stones, fast lapsing back into the wild.

The swelling of the Great Langdale Beck in times of storm is no new matter in the dale. Across the valley from the stony little town of Chapel Style stands to-day the farm of Baisbrown, one of the two or three dwellings that are set at the foot of the northward-facing slopes of Lingmoor. It is to-day very lonely, separated from the busy side of the valley by a tract of river flats that in winter are often under water. Here long ago the monks of Conishead Priory, far away on the shores of Morecambe Bay, found themselves confronted with the vagaries of the beck. The little manor of Basebrun, as it used to be called, "the rough ground of the cow-shed", was granted in the thirteenth century to this priory. It extended south over Lingmoor into Little Langdale, and it was bounded on the north by the Great Langdale Beck, and thus the monks found themselves compelled to build a bank to defend their lands against its flood-waters. The soil of the bottom of the dale made the growing of hedges easy, and the monks enclosed their property here with hedges—"following the hedge which the said prior and Hugh made, to the bank of the water of Langden". There are hedges still, dividing the green levels of the dale into queer-shaped enclosures, and on the fell slopes stone walls mark out equally queer, irregular patches of hill-side—walls the more

noticeable on account of the bareness of the Langdale fells.

A learned tome might well be written on the subject of stone walls at the Lakes. The course of recent history in the district has been marked by their gradual extension, in a stony spider's web of hundreds of miles of stone fences, over the country-side; still more recent history has seen their slow decay. Until comparatively modern times at the Lakes the fells were open common land, but, later, as these commons were enclosed, walls were built until they intersected the lower slopes with that familiar network of dark stone fences that is now accepted as a characteristic part of the Lake Country scenery. Often enough the walls run up to the sky-line, climbing the steepest slopes as if they had the power of clinging to the land, like the wall up Nab Scar above Rydal, and those on the green fells that rise so abruptly from the Troutbeck valley. They cross grassy slopes so steep and bare, like those of Stone Arthur at Grasmere, that the stones for the walls must have been carried up by horse-drawn sledges. There are walls running up crags, as on the fells east of Rosthwaite; parallel walls enclosing lanes, now mysterious, but probably once used for driving sheep to and from the common above; walls surrounding intakes of every conceivable shape, of which the older ones, to be seen on Naddle Fell, Silverhow, Rydal Fell, and almost everywhere, are said to be marked by a rounded upper bulge, since it was easier to build a wall without corners and, in the early days, no one cared particularly how much or how little was enclosed from the common fell. And so a fantastic

pattern is drawn in stone upon the Lake Country hillsides.

Stone walls are not limited to the fells. In the dales also they are found, built of rounded stones from some stream bed. But it seems certain that in the early days of history at the Lakes, dykes and even hedges and wooden fences were more common than walls. Once land began to be enclosed, and the boundaries of large properties ceased to be defined by striking natural objects like "the white stone in Little Greenup", or as "beginning at the top of the rock which stands in the ditch above the oak", dykes of turf topped with stakes and wattle were built, like that Rydal fence of 1279, of which remains can still be seen on Nab Scar. Over in Eskdale the monks of Furness Abbey had permission about 1290 to enclose their farm at Butterilket with a "dyke, wall, or paling", such as the deer of the adjoining forest of Egremont could leap, and they chose to build a dyke, which can still be traced. For wooden fences the native woods supplied plenty of material. Hedgerows of young growing trees, half cut through and trained to grow horizontally, in a few years formed a dense partition, while light fences of hurdles, easily removable, were used to enclose the growing hay crops of such little communities as thirteenth-century Ambleside. The limits of cultivated lands not requiring such protection were at first defined by "mear stones". At Ambleside an old reference to the "Wall Yeat" seems to show that walls, and hence gates in them, were then so uncommon as to be sufficiently defined by such a description. As already noted, the manor of Baisbrown was partly enclosed by a hedge, and it is recorded that

the ancient bounds of the manor of Coniston followed in places a hedge, "and so upwards by the hedge which parts the several Allans belonging to Yewdale from Furness Fell grounds".

But on higher ground where, above the dales, there was less woodland, a soil too thin to grow lusty hedges, stones often strewn about in plenty, and no house-building to compete for their use, walls came in time to be built instead of dykes: even on Furness Fells, noted in early days for their forests, tenants were directed in the time of Henry VIII that their enclosures from the common land were "to be hedged with dyke or wall". Most of the fell walls of to-day, however, date back to the enclosures that were made in the later part of the eighteenth century and in the earlier half of the nineteenth. In those days happy farmers at the Lakes, with roads and railways beginning to open to them the markets of industrial England and bringing in all kinds of new agricultural ideas, fell to enclosing their commons. They improved them with burning, paring, liming, and the like commendable activities, and grew upon them in some places crops of oats, in others but sheep, though such sheep as their "fore-elders", in the days of promiscuous mingling of all kinds of beasts, bad and good, on commons that were shockingly overcrowded, never knew. By 1772 the Grasmere fells were noted as already marked everywhere with partition walls. However, many hundreds of miles of walls are now falling into ruin. Those in the dales are generally maintained: on a frosty morning the farmer at Bannerrigg, on the road to Windermere, joins the roadman in throwing sand on the icy surface of the hill in order to avoid wasting time

in building up gaps in his walls made by skidding motorists. But on the fells there is scarcely a wall that is not tottering to decay and full of gaps. Built very largely in the interests of the sheep farmers, yet, in these days of prosperous sheep-farming, the walls are allowed to collapse, and conditions are slowly going back to those of the old days of open commons, though to a very limited extent, fences of wood and wire are used. The reason for the decay of the old walls is the increased cost of labour. In 1845 dry stone walls about four feet six inches high were built for eight shillings per seven yards, this price including the cost of gathering and carting the stones. Old Lakeland farmers look back to the days when wallers worked, and worked well, for twelve or fourteen hours a day, and got 1s. 6d. for their day's toil. Now they work for eight hours (and perhaps not quite so enthusiastically, since walling has become an unpopular job at the Lakes in these days), and for this receive ten to twelve shillings. Early in 1929 a contract for the repair of some 250 yards of gaps in a Little Langdale boundary wall was let for £17 10s. Here, of course, stones were to hand, and at the rate of 9s. 9d. or so for seven yards the cost compares very unfavourably with that of 1845. However, as is only just and right, it is such off-comes as will persist in building themselves residences at the Lakes who pay the most for their walls, and in such a favourite and cultured nook as Grasmere a garden wall, some four feet high, built, it is true, of stones that have to be quarried, costs about £3 a yard. So it is a merciful dispensation of providence for the Grasmere farmer that his ancestors accumulated enough stone in the walls on his holding

to maintain in perpetuity the comparatively small length of walling that he now keeps in repair.

Many walls have been built and pulled down again in Langdale. Here, in the thirteenth century, there were some twenty cottars and tenants with rights for any number of beasts on the "unstinted" common of the fells, and certainly by the fifteenth century the dale was fully occupied, and all its fertile lands taken up. The Conishead monks had a house, and grange, and corn-mill, about where the present Elterwater Hall stands, and here there was once a little hamlet of some thirteen houses that are now vanished. Where, in 1819, there was but one farm at the foot of the Band, that tongue of fell that projects into Great Langdale between Mickleden and Oxendale, was formerly a little settlement of five houses. Gone, too, is the cloth-mill that once stood at Millbeck above the present New Dungeon Gill hotel, and with it all the bustling activity of the days in the early sixteenth century, when intakes were enclosed from the Langdale fells, probably for the drying of cloth, and new houses built, and the dale shared in the prosperity that the cloth trade brought to the famous family of Bensons who lived on the slopes of Loughrigg. Then came the plague and ruined walls, and some dismal plants of laurel are supposed by old writers to have marked further up the valley than Oak How, near Baisbrown, the place where the dead, dangerous in death, were buried. The iron forge that once stood at Hacket near Colwith Force, and which was in use early in the eighteenth century, is gone like the cloth-mill, but Langdale now has its quarries, the famous green-slate quarries whose vast and shivering piles of

shattered stone make hideous the landscape about Chapel Style, and, also, the Elterwater Gunpowder Works, opened in 1825. The latter industry, its mysterious activities very suitably concealed amidst rocks and trees, Langdale owes to its woods, which supplied the charcoal then used in the manufacture of gunpowder. Charcoal is no longer made here, but in the quarries of the district is found a local market for the blasting powder that is now manufactured.

That the Lake District dales have, in common with much of rural England, kept alive something of what we are pleased to call the old superstitions, becomes apparent now and then even in these days of motor-buses. And it was a Langdale farmer who a few years ago became conscious of a curse. His wife also felt a curse that was like a black rope hanging round her neck. Very depressed about all this, the farmer paid £10 to a gipsy woman with "some witchery about her", who was, she maintained, skilled in dealing with curses. However, he subsequently repented him of his bargain, and recovered his money at the Ambleside police court. In an autumnal dusk in Langdale it might become quite easy to brood on witches.

As a rule it is very silent in Langdale, save for the murmurs of wind and water and bleak sounds of storm from those crags of Pike o' Stickle that rise into the wilder weather that drives above the dale. As a rule this silence is profound on a November evening when the dusk begins to fall. Against a fiery glow Lingmoor Fell stands black as the coming night, but Crinkle Crags and Bowfell and the Pikes are withdrawn behind a delicate haze, silhouettes sunless and austere. But suddenly, if it is a Saturday and the right November

Saturday, there sounds from the distant shadows towards Hell Gill a baying of hounds, a faint, most musical outcry, and yet plaintive with something of that same forlorn dignity with which the dale is resigning itself to the autumn dusk. Simultaneously the still air is filled with harsh cries, cries incredibly like those of bookmakers, and a minute later a gate gives a view of a crowd, spread about the dim flat by the beck and facing the dark wall of western fell from which had come those wild voices as of a phantom chase. Then white specks come into sight coursing, in silence now, along the dusky breast of Pike o' Blisco—specks that descend, astonishingly, dark masses of crag, specks that, following nothing more palpable that the scent of aniseed, surmount walls and speed through withered bracken and over gills with an uncanny fleetness.

It is the Langdale Shepherds' Meet, and the Hound Trail is drawing to its close. Over the slope below Blea Tarn and down the last lap of the trail flashes into view a racing hound; another and another; and on the instant a great and mingled roar of voices rises from the crowd. For the seconds that remain, as the leading hounds draw in, this united clamour continues, each man shouting to the hound he favours. Overhead the misty glow is fading; hills and dale alike grow unsubstantial in the wan pallor that precedes the dark, and then the leading hounds reach, and are merged in, the shouting throng, and instantly the uproar ceases and the mountain silence again makes itself felt.

Hound trails are immensely popular in the Lake Country, as they are also in some other parts of northern England and in the Border counties.

They lead to a good deal of betting, but they are fine, wild things to see and listen to among the fells, and they are comfortable things for those whose power of imagination gives them bad moments at fox hunts. For here there is no anxious beast, perhaps a vixen in the breeding season, hurrying in front of those white specks that climb walls, and cut their feet on screes, and leap over rocks, with such a relentless fury of haste, and the welcome that each owner (and particularly if he has been successful) gives his hound as it reaches the goal is, indeed, a pleasant thing to see.

The hound trail is, however, only a side issue of the Langdale Shepherds' Meet, and it is fit and proper that now a word or two, as a matter of fact some twenty pages, should be devoted to the Lake Country sheep.

CHAPTER VI

THE HERDWICK SHEEP

Sheep are sticking to their honest creed,
And helping us in our most urgent need,
King of the Lakeland fells and dales,
Pride of the shepherd, hard as nails.

B. ARMSTRONG

RECENTLY a Borrowdale sheep-farmer fell and broke his leg while trying to rescue a Herdwick ewe and lamb that had climbed a crag to such a position that they could move neither up nor down. Yet while in Keswick hospital he wrote verses on the Herdwick sheep from which the above lines are quoted. Not every beast could, under such circumstances, inspire eulogies of her person and habits from her injured owner, but, indeed, sheep are nowadays the mainstay of the Lakeland farmer.

They are the rent-payers. In some famous old sheep farms, like Gatesgarth at Buttermere, and Westhead on Thirlmere, and Watendleth, visitors are taken during the short summer season. They occupy the parlour, dedicated to them and to the display of show-cards of prize-winning Herdwick sheep; they observe with unseeing eyes the evolutions of woolly flocks and sheep-dogs and shepherds about the holding; they play happily with motherless lambs who follow them, if not restrained,

along the dark passages of the house. Then they return to their urban or suburban homes, leaving behind them money, very welcome, and (usually) pleasant memories almost as welcome in the long winters of these remote and lonely farms. And whether they go, or stay, or come, the real business of the farm, the care of sheep, continues to be engaged upon with unremitting zeal.

There are in our country some thirty different varieties of sheep, each so intimately adapted to its own locality that they seem almost as much a product of the soil as are the plants common to the district. A sheep on its native pastures has a value far above that of some poor woolly stranger introduced upon them. The native of a breed acclimatized, perhaps during centuries, to every peculiarity of weather, grazing, soil, and topography of one region, finds himself singularly at a disadvantage when transferred in a motor-lorry somewhere else. He loses condition, or he dies, or if he be a Herdwick sheep he returns home as fast as possible. In the Lake District it is the Herdwick breed of sheep, unknown, except a few sold for crossing purposes, elsewhere, that is the local and native variety. They are not entirely popular with some farmers. In South Westmorland particularly the Rough Fell breed is replacing some Herdwick flocks, and in other parts of the district farmers have tried to cross their Herdwick sheep with Blackface or Swaledale breeds. But in so doing they find themselves opposed to something mysterious and insurmountable—the fact that fells and sheep between them have developed so close an affinity that no other breed, hardy hill-sheep though they may be, will thrive on the great central mass of the Lake Country hills.

Herdwicks are almost the sole stock of the mountains ranging from Skiddaw and Saddleback, the Caldbeck fells, and Helvellyn, to the low lands of Furness on the south, including the Haweswater fells and those about Ennerdale. There are some Herdwick sheep on Shap fells and in the Blackface district of Longsleddale, Kentmere and Troutbeck, but it is on the high central mountains that their kingdom remains unassailed. Some twenty years ago it was prophesied that the Herdwick sheep would soon be extinct on the fells owing to the losses due to liver fluke. This forecast has been proved completely wrong, and at the ram fairs held at Keswick on the first Saturday in October all the rams are of the Herdwick breed, save for about one per cent of Swaledales, and after the fair the roads are full of little groups of rams, with sedate horned faces and woolly bodies tinged pink with sheep dip, walking with dignity to those farms that have hired them for the winter. At present there is no sign of any other breed usurping those wild hill grazings on which, it seems, Herdwick sheep can alone survive.

No one knows where these little sheep came from, whether they arrived in the Lake Country as Herdwick sheep, or whether they have become as they are to-day after many centuries of the Lake rain and the Lake fells. One legend says forty small sheep were washed ashore from the wreck of a Spanish ship somewhere near Ravenglass; that they immediately took to the hills, and that farmers, particularly round Wasdale, appropriated them, and jealously kept them and their progeny in their own hands. Another tradition assigns them to those Norse wayfarers who, as already noted, landed on

the coast and gradually drifted inland into the Lake Country dales, cumbered no doubt in a domestic manner with beasts and wives and children. Anyhow, Furness Abbey founded in the twelfth century sheep farms of a particular character that were known as "Herdwicks", and the sheep upon these farms became known as Herdwick sheep. Lawson Park and Parkamoor on the eastern fells above Coniston Lake were such foundations by the Abbey, and these farms are still Herdwicks, still stocked with Herdwick sheep, though the house at Lawson Park is now empty and its lands included with those of a more low-lying farm, Bank Ground. Upon much of the fell country sheep followed deer. As wool became a product of international importance the deer in the many old deer forests of the Lake Country were destroyed, and by the reign of Edward I sheep, timid, helpless, woolly things, had largely taken their place. In 1639 Sir Daniel Fleming of Rydal Hall owned some 1,300 sheep and 1,200 lambs, and by now sheep were as important as money-makers to the lord of the manor as to the statesman. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were some 30,000 sheep in the parish of Crosthwaite, Cumberland, alone. They are still, as already noted earlier in this chapter, the chief preoccupation of the dalesmen at the Lakes.

It is not only that all true Lakeland farmers are lovers of Herdwick sheep. But the farms are small farms, their holdings of land in the dale are little holdings, quite incapable in the local uncertain weather of growing enough of anything to support a family, and they only become an economic proposition by reason of the fell rights possessed by almost all of them. These rights of

pasturage over so many hundred or thousand acres of mountain are useful, in the Lake District proper, only for sheep. The fells will grow no other crop beyond wool and mutton, and Herdwick wool and mutton at that. Yet in many ways the Lake hills are ill-suited even to these extraordinarily hardy little sheep that have so identified themselves with their mountain pastures that to eat their mutton is to taste the aromatic herbage of the heights, to wear their wool is to be dressed in the sober colours of the rain-swept moorland slopes.

Good herbage for grazing is scanty on the fells. Much of the grass is, as will be noted later, mossy. On many of the lower slopes what grazing there is is broken in upon by masses of rock and crag and scree, bare of all vegetation save for those green succulent tufts of fern growing in the cracks and on the ledges of precipices, often fostered by the débris of a buzzard's larder, which tempt the sheep to such rock climbing exploits that they become crag-fast. The upper slopes rise into those regions of stone and cloud where there is nothing to eat, save moss and lichen and perhaps an inch or two of dwarf willow in many square yards, and yet which are ranged over, as are the barren tops of the Scafell group and Great Gable and Skiddaw, by these sheep, which, so easily agitated into panic on their enforced treks along the dale roads, are yet perfectly composed amid crags and storm which would daunt even a rock-climber. A Herdwick sheep must perforce eat everything that can be eaten on the fells; furze, juniper, whins, fern, ivy, heather, the leaves of holly and ash. In times of severe weather, wandering little groups of sheep crop the ivy on the farm-house walls

as neatly as a man could clip it, and for as high up as they can reach when tilted up on their little hind-legs.

Foxes take a good many lambs, and carrion crows account for some weakly ones. Ravens and buzzards are suspect, according to some farmers, but others aver that they only take lambs already dead. More dangerous than beasts of prey, the constant threat of starvation, and the risks of their precipitous walks in life, is the weather. Snow is the greatest immediate and direct danger to which the Herdwick sheep are exposed. The flocks, with the exception of young sheep and the lambing ewes, are left out on the fells all through the winter. When the farmer has warning of a probable fall, the shepherds and dogs range their mountain pasturage, turning the sheep down towards the lower slopes or bringing them into the dales. But very often snow comes without warning, and then groups of sheep are drifted over on the fells, in spite of the legendary habit, not particularly evident nowadays, of the Herdwick sheep to seek in storm the exposed and hence drift-free slopes. A mountain sheep snowed over can live on its own wool for weeks if nothing else is available, but nobody is anxious that it should do so, and after a snowfall shepherds and dogs risk their lives in the strange new, silent land that snow creates from the familiar fells, to search for buried and wandering sheep. Some sheep-dogs have what seem uncanny powers of scenting the little beasts under deep drifts.

Less actively dangerous, but insidious and persistent, is the effect of rain. Large areas of the Scottish Highlands are admittedly too wet for the good of the sheep that, there also, are often the sole crop of the hills. So

FEEDING HERDWICK SHEEP

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is Snowdonia. So are the Lake Country fells. Many of the sheep pastures, such as the Gatesgarth fell grazings at Buttermere, are known as "dry" fells; craggy, stony, slopes from which the water drains quickly away, and here that very uncomfortable little creature, the liver fluke, is not to be found. Indeed, Lakeland farmers often complain bitterly of the losses from liver fluke among those of their stock that have been wintered on lower lands near the sea while their home flocks are uninfected. But on the low lands and ill-drained fell areas at the Lakes the heavy rainfall makes it easy for the liver fluke to engage upon its horrid activities: it hatches; it bores its heartless way into the soft body of some freshwater snail; after a due period of growth and feeding (at the expense of the snail) it emerges again upon the world and, attaching itself to some tall blade of grass, waits for a sheep to come and eat it, grass and all. From there its history is better (for the lay reader) left in obscurity. Suffice it to say that unless treated with violent drugs that sometimes kill the sheep as well as the fluke this persistent creature ends by killing its host. Seasons of heavy rain, when the grass lands and fell slopes remain wet for weeks at a time, admirably suit the fluke and his attendant snails, and he can, indeed, only be fought upon his native soil by drought and by lapwings, who eat the snails. To severe and prolonged frost he seems immune, but were it possible so to drain the pastures that the snails departed by desiccation—or do snails possibly migrate?—then the fluke would likewise depart, and human hearts and sheep livers would no longer be wrung by his ravages.

There are other things which the Lake Country rains

do to their native sheep. They wash that unctuous lanoline out of their fleeces which prevents the wool from matting together, and so their wool mats, and that is very bad for everybody, the sheep included; they often wet the wool on shearing days, and wet fleeces are bad to shear; they may soak into the fleeces of sheep being driven to a fair, or during their spring and autumn treks to and from the mountains, and so, burdened with pounds of wet and heavy wool, the little creatures soon get exhausted. Beyond this, sheep kept on wet land are liable to footrot.

So things are not altogether happy for the Herdwick sheep on those high grazings, very lonely, where he suffers who knows what stress of storm, what bewilderment of pain when things go wrong, what unquestioning surrender to death when between them the crags and the wild weather have beaten the life out of his little body, faithful to the hills to the last. The death-rate of sheep, more from accidental injuries than from illness, is high on mountain pastures. But the Herdwick copes with his difficulties as cheerfully as can be, as well he may, since he and his ancestors have been learning for many hundred years how to order life on the Lake mountains. His coat is thick and strong and withstands the winter storms; his chest, like the chest of a mountaineer, is deep and wide; his knees are strong; his wide white feet give him a grip on the rocks; his long, flowing, wool stands up around neck and shoulders in a protecting ruff. So equipped, he can face almost any storm, and within his woolly armour dwells besides a brave spirit, courageous and alert, so that where a great Downs sheep would succumb with scarcely a protesting bleat

the Herdwick faces the blast, scrapes the snow off his feeding-ground, manages to subsist on a few dead leaves and a mouthful of wool, and regains condition quickly when things become normal once more.

He is gifted also with, from the farmer's point of view, an even excessive nimbleness. He does not spend his days, like his huge stupid brethren in the south, confined between hurdles and feeding languidly on turnips. To cope with the Lake hills he must be nimble. He must range far and wide in search of food; he must be able to climb crags and cross screes. He does all these things, even too admirably. Led by greed and daring, he finds himself crag-fast, too often. From some rocky ledge or "bink" he (more usually she) may then be heard bleating piteous protests for a week or so, until the shepherd judges him to be so weakened as to submit, without too much of a struggle on the edge of space, to capture. Then the farmer has to embark upon the arduous process of rescue, and by means of climbing and ropes, to try to raise or lower the troublesome little beast to safety. This part of a shepherd's duties is no sinecure. Within the last year or two from Falcon Crag, the Watendleth fells, Rannerdale Knott above Crummock, the Langdale Pikes, crags above Thirlmere, and many another rocky fell, crag-fast sheep have been recovered after dangerous scrambles on the part of the farmer concerned. To descend a craggy hill-side with a ewe slung round the climber's neck and its lamb, with legs tied, threaded like a woolly bracelet on his arm, is not an exercise that would commend itself to everybody.

This intrepid activity of the Herdwick sheep enables him, in moments of emotion, to ignore the stone walls

built to keep him within bounds. A visitor to Grasmere was astonished one winter day to observe a Herdwick sheep chasing a cat. With open mouth and obvious intent to bite, the sheep leapt after the cat to the top of a garden wall and hunted the cat along it. Certainly the cat escaped, but a Southdown sheep could not even begin to chase a cat along a garden wall. When they are willing to be confined, stone walls do confine Herdwick sheep, and in them here and there are left square holes, known as hogg holes, through which sheep may be driven when required. But the wall is only a barrier when the sheep so wills it. Thus on some November day of frost and silence in Borrowdale the off-come may watch a flock of Herdwick ewes passing quietly and decorously through such a hogg hole at Seathwaite, unhurried by the wise old sheep-dog. But at their rear, very properly, comes the ram. To cover their retreat he makes rushes at the dog, and when the dog, also very properly, insists at last that he shall follow his little mates, he charges at the hogg hole in a great flurry of fright and temper. Then the silence of the dale is broken by a dreadful crash. The ram's wide horns have stuck fast in the hole. For a horrid moment his undefended rear is exposed to the feigned assaults of the dog—then the ram backs out and with a superb leap and scramble, that shows the clean-cut lines of his splendid, lissom body he clears the wall and races away into the mists after the ewes. Gardeners at Grasmere, where the rose-bushes look very succulent and have but a feeble grip on the thin and rocky soil, often have to lament the sudden disappearance over the wall of their finest Frau Karl Druschki, entangled in the fleece of a marauding sheep.

Hardy and spirited and active, living much of the year under conditions in no way different from those of wild animals, and governed by some such skeleton of an organization as impels the mountain sheep of Wales to set certain of their number doing sentry-go about the grazing flocks, the Herdwick adapts himself most adroitly to his hills. And nature has besides set limits to what little mountain sheep may do: they cannot grow big bodies; they mature slowly; their wool remains coarse and wiry; their fertility is low. Prospects for most wool-growers are bright nowadays: the prices for wool are high and rising, but the Herdwick fleeces have not shared in this increase of value. A fine-woolled sheep could not withstand the winter storms on the Lake fells; if wool is to be grown there it must be but the poor harsh wool of the Herdwick. Moreover, there are few twins from Herdwick mothers; of some nine hundred lambing ewes at Gatesgarth only about thirty produce more than one black-faced scrap of a lamb, a lamb whose short, wiry wool is so mottled with black and white that, curled up asleep on the hill-side, he looks like a stone, to the confusion of his enemies. It is the same on the hills of Wales and Yorkshire, and, indeed, the mothers of the mountain flocks have enough to do to rear one lamb.

Their bodies thus guarded against the dangers of their mountain life, that something within a sheep which directs its conduct gives them an irresistible devotion to these same mountains, as if nature, having moulded them to mountains, saw to it also that such moulding should not be wasted on the languors of a lowland life. Most Herdwick sheep will, if left alone, graze all their

lives within a few hundred yards of that part of the mountain where they were born or reared, where likewise their mother was born and reared, and so back for generations. For so strong is their affection for their native "heaf" or pasture, that the flocks are let with the farms. To attempt to transfer them from one farm to another would involve frightful confusion. So sheep are not sold, except with the farm they inhabit, to buyers within the Lake Country. They are sold at the ancient sheep fairs held at Hawkshead, Eskdale, Ambleside, Kendal, Windermere, Hesket Newmarket, and other places, to buyers from outside, and it is these sheep, particularly the ewes, sold to alien and lowland country, that engage upon incredible journeys to regain their own mountain-sides. Often enough they do not at once desert their new home, and it almost seems as if they did their best to give the strange pastures a fair trial, until at last the longing for their old fells becomes insupportable, and then, one day, they are gone. For some weeks, perhaps, they are beyond human ken. They are advertised as "strayed" in the local papers, but never was any creature less astray. Without help of man or beast they make their laborious way, living on the country as they go, perhaps giving birth to lambs and going on again, with the lambs beside them, back to the pastures of their youth. A ewe sold from Ennerdale to Torver, beside Coniston Water, after four months disappeared. A few weeks later she was once more, with what secret rapture no mere human can guess, treading her native heaf on the Ennerdale fells. A Watendleth ewe, bought by a farmer near Kendal one autumn, returned to Watendleth the following June,

and it was also a ewe which, sold from Wasdale Head to a Caldbeck purchaser, one October, appeared again at Wasdale in July. Even rams, uninspired by that maternal instinct that takes a Herdwick ewe in lambing time back to her old heaf, sometimes engage upon these tremendous walks, and there are many instances similar to the case of a Wasdale ram, hired for the winter to a farmer near Keswick, who, as spring came, felt, no doubt, strange stirrings within him, the call of his old, loved fell-sides, and so trudged, heavy fleece, curled horns, solemn face and all, back to Wasdale Head. It is obvious from all this that Herdwick sheep have memories, but which, if any, of the few senses granted to human beings can guide them in their long journeys through the unknown is not so clear.

If the sheep have so responded to Lake Country conditions as to have become almost a natural growth of the fells, the farmer has adapted his management of them no less thoroughly to his surroundings. What bulks largest in the lives of both sheep and farmer is the fact that their ways are laid amongst mountains: it is the fells that settle for both the manner of their daily life. Grazing on the hill-sides is so poor that the fell rights of the farms must necessarily be large, and often enough some little holding in a dale, with a few grey farm buildings set amid little stone-walled grass fields, controls all the hill slopes up to the sky-line. On many parts of the craggy, stony slopes of the central mountains four or five acres would barely suffice to feed through the year one Herdwick sheep, little fellow though he be. Gatesgarth farm, for example, has fell rights extending "up to where the water parts" all

around its green hollow. Mr. Nelson's Herdwicks, divided into five different "stocks" according to their pasturage, range up to, and sometimes beyond, the sky-line of Red Pike, Haystacks, Brandreth, Fleetwith, Honister Crag, and the rest of the rocky heights that enclose the old farm and its few acres of green flats at the head of Buttermere Lake. This farm includes about three thousand acres, but no one is very sure how many sheep there are ranging over them. At Wasdale Head Hall about eleven hundred sheep are let with the farm. They range over some thousands of acres of fells, but only a few very small fields, a very little area of "inland" as it is called, is walled down in the dale for the ewes in the lambing season. The thousand or so Herdwick sheep of Seathwaite farm in Borrowdale roam over a great area that includes the top of Great Gable, Great End, Gillercombe, and Sty Head, and here also there are only a few little walled patches of low-lying grazing in the stony flats about the farmstead. Gillerthwaite in Ennerdale at one time had three thousand sheep, and there are less than fifty acres of "inland" in the dale to accommodate the mothers of the flock. The network of stone walls by Watendleth Tarn encloses what seems a ridiculously small area of grass to supplement the scanty grazing on fells that stretch from Black Crag to Eagle Crag, and which at one time supported some three thousand sheep. Probably the largest fell farm at the Lakes now is Westhead, above Thirlmere. Some six or seven small farms were drowned when Manchester raised the level of the lake, and Mr. Isaac Thompson, of Herdwick fame, controls the vast area of sheep walk that belonged to them. But the rising waters also swallowed

up the "inland" pastures of the little lost farms, and the position of "Master of Helvellyn" must be made rather anxious in cold and backward springs for lack of those comparatively luscious and sheltered grazings that now lie beneath the waters.

It is owing also to the rigours of their mountain life that there has grown up the habit of wintering the younger sheep in lower lands, if possible near the sea. Of late years Walney Island has been increasingly favoured by Lake Country farmers as a winter resort for their lambs. In autumn, in the advertisement columns of the local papers appear offers of desirable grazings by farmers outside the mountains who yearn to entertain Herdwick boarders, and simultaneously anxious inquiries by Lake Country men seeking "good, sound wintering for Herdwick hoggs", a hogg being a last year's lamb. Thus it happens that in spring and autumn motorists on Lakeland roads find themselves, too often, driving before them an agitated, galloping mass of grey wool, a flock bound homewards or for its winter quarters, that fills the road entirely until it escapes in woolly cascades over the walls on either side.

And again it is to the hard conditions of life among the fells that is due the late lambing of Herdwick ewes. Farmers arrange that the first lambs shall not appear before April, and even then Easter visitors may find themselves in the midst of that combination of snow and lambs that is so hateful to the sheep-farmer. And yet a Herdwick lamb, precariously balanced on a frozen drift, and baa-ing vigorously from a wide mouth that seems ridiculously red in its indignant black face, is (to the off-come) a cheerful enough sight.

There has been a certain amount of enclosure of the fell grazings, particularly, as noted in the last chapter, during the first half of the nineteenth century. As a result much of the intermingling of the flocks was prevented and the Herdwick sheep improved in quality, while the older sheep, "aged wethers", which, on account of their knowledge of their own pasture and their fighting qualities in defending it against trespassing sheep, were formerly kept, became no longer necessary, and were killed in youth to provide the small joints beloved of modern households. Now, however, many of these enclosures have lapsed or are lapsing back into open waste. The fence between the Grasmere and the Borrowdale sheep is down in many places; that along the tops between Buttermere and Ennerdale has succumbed to snow and wind; many of the hundreds of miles of stone walling in the Lake Country, built to enclose sheep, as already noted, are now partly broken down. So in practice the farmers have to deal with flocks that can range over an almost unlimited area of fell, and though matters are simplified by the strong devotion of most of the sheep each to its own pasture, yet even the home pastures are so wide in area, of so steep and craggy a nature, that man, by himself, is helpless to control the sheep that wander over them. Hence has come the sheep-dog, thin, short-haired creatures of no particular colour, aloof with that remoteness of manner that comes from a mind preoccupied with serious matters, with eyes often of the strange opal colour that seems a reflection of the blind mists through which they so often scour the hills. Like the Herdwick sheep and the Lakeland farmer, they have

grown through long generations to an almost perfect understanding of the business of life among the fells. They are an essential part of the scanty equipment of the Herdwick sheep-farmer, and their efficiency is as much a matter of test and keen competition as are the points of a prize-winning Herdwick ram. Sheep-dog trials rank with Shearings and Fairs and Shepherds' Meets as normal features of the farmer's year, and at them, whether on the remote upland of Applethwaite Common, at Rydal, or Ullswater, or Troutbeck, visitors marvel at that close understanding between man and dog which is developed in long days of mutual struggling against weather, and the vexatiousness of mountains, and the ceaseless perversity of even Herdwick sheep.

In spite of their general affection for their own pastures there are certain Herdwick sheep who wander. Something may frighten them: in the old days a wicked farmer would deliberately frighten his neighbour's sheep from their heaf, and send his own on to their abandoned grazing. And even if there are no longer wicked farmers at the Lakes, certainly sheep still wander, a few of them, seeking perhaps, like the rest of us, some satisfaction that lies beyond the sky-line. To cope with these uneasy spirits there has been evolved that unique local publication, the *Shepherds' Guide*. Every sheep-farm has its own mark for its sheep, and by a complicated system of dabs of colour on the fleece, and what sometimes amounts to a perfect fretwork of snips cut out of the ear, there have been devised some hundreds of different sheep-marks. In the *Shepherds' Guide* these marks are all set forth. It is a big book adorned by pictures, each

showing two sheep, the same two sheep, standing in modern editions simpering by a lakeside, one ornamented by black ears of prodigious size, the other staring at it amiably, and on their fleeces, and cut out of the large black ears, are shown the various sheep-marks. To the layman there is undoubtedly some monotony in several hundred pictures of the same two sheep, however embellished by cabalistic markings, but they are generally preceded by letterpress well worth reading, for, since the *Guide* was first published, in 1817, some great masters of the Herdwick craft have written in it words of true sheep wisdom. On the mountain pastures of Wales the want of such a guide makes the identification of stray sheep a difficult matter.

The Herdwick sheep are marked at the shearings in July. After a long day of shearing the flocks, brought down the previous day from the fells, the workers mark the sheep, and then drive them forth again to the heights, their little shaven bodies strangely white against the fell slopes in the evening sunshine.

Also to deal with wandering sheep are held the Shepherds' Meets, to which are brought sheep from all the surrounding country which are known to be strays. There also assemble the farmers. The stray sheep are put in a fold, identified, and taken home again by their owners, there no doubt to begin their Odyssey all over again as soon as the spirit moves them so to do. The Shepherds' Meet held on High Street until 1835 is now a thing of the past, and the Mardale Meet in November is the most famous, the more so from the thought of the waters that Manchester soon will cause to close over the Dun Bull and the old fold where perhaps a hundred

or a hundred and fifty stray sheep are collected. Nowadays hundreds of people besides the farmers and shepherds concerned attend this meet and the fox hunt; and hound trail, and concert, that have been added to the business of exchanging sheep. Sometimes as many as eleven different concerts are in progress at the same moment within the crowded ramifications of the Dun Bull on the evening after the meet. Shepherds' Meets are held at many other places, at Braithwaite and Matterdale, Wasdale Head and Buttermere, some in summer, as at Wylie Ghyll among the Caldbeck hills, some in winter, as in Langdale.

So with Fairs and Shearings, Shepherds' Meets, Dippings and Washings, all of which affairs require the bringing of the sheep down to the dales from their far ranging of the fells, the Herdwick sheep-farmer's year goes by. The sheep themselves suffer these things, regard with a luminous, inscrutable stare the strangeness of man, and return gladly to the heights, the call of whose wide spaces and mossy pastures is always sounding within them. It is admittedly difficult for a stranger, enclosed within satisfied layers of urban ignorance, to feel as he ought towards a sheep. Yet even a confirmed townsman can scarcely read, without something of the thrill with which one of the older flockmasters wrote it, this tribute to the Herdwick sheep that appears in one of the editions of the *Shepherds' Guide*:

"Who would not feel just a little proud to see them rolling down the mountain breasts at times of washing and shearing, going mostly on land where nothing else could live upon, with fleeces flowing and through their noses blowing?"

CHAPTER VII

CLOUD AND STONE AT WASDALE

Indeed, when considered in a very broad and general way, a river is seen to be a moving mixture of water and waste in variable proportions, but mostly water; while a creeping sheet of hill-side waste is a moving mixture of waste and water in variable proportions, but mostly waste. . . . They are only the extreme members of a continuous series.—W. M. Davis, *Geographical Essays*

IT is at all times a solemn thing to approach Wasdale, and especially is it solemn to do so from the seaboard lands down to which its cloudy valley opens. For Wasdale is a place of cloud and stone, of stones that reach from the bottom of the screes, some two hundred feet below the surface of the lake, up to the topmost crags of Scafell and the Gable, of cloud that seems as native a growth upon the mountains as is the bracken of their lower slopes. And the Wasdale cloud is the colour of grey rock, and the Wasdale stones are cloud-coloured, for in the pale shingle of the Lingmell Beck, and the grey screes, and the more sinister darkness of the upper crags, may be seen every colour of cloud from that of a summer mist to the gloom of coming snow above Pillar Mountain.

Although the valley opens out to the low, fertile lands

about Gosforth and Drigg, and is besides a channel for the mild winds from the Atlantic, yet it remains bare and stony. Its waters flow to the sea through lands that are wooded and park-like, where hay-fields are full of flowering grasses in June, and where honeysuckle covers the tall hedgerows with an almost incredible tangle of scented blossom. But as Wastwater is neared from Gosforth the road runs over a granite country, where banks of stone and turf take the place of hedges, as they do in Cornwall and Anglesey, and ahead, between these stone banks Wasdale is seen, a trough of misty darkness beneath clouds that are slate-coloured. Once the oak woods of Wasdale Hall are left behind there is Wastwater itself, its calm waters, themselves dark with a grim and silent darkness, reflecting, in a series of stone-coloured and inverted fans, the thousand feet or so of scree that runs up to the crags of Illgill Head. The lakeside road runs through a treeless and rocky country, save for the wood of larch and fir, alder and birch, that stands where the Nether Beck and Over Beck reach the lake from the wild and treeless recesses of Copeland Forest, and the first view of Wasdale Head itself from the road near the head of the lake discloses but a maze of stone walls, dark walls, dividing into a crazy pattern of little enclosures the green flat of the dale, with on either side slopes as dark rising to crags half hidden by a low roof of grey cloud. On a stormy day sea-gulls fly, white-winged against the clouds, low between dale and sky, and their wild clamour sounds as forlorn in these inland solitudes as it is cheerful among the sand-dunes of Ravenglass. Even the handful of sycamores that stands near the hotel and the

little larch plantation at Burnthwaite in the clouded light are dark as the crags themselves, and the sea-gulls, as they drift about over the stone walls, seem, since yew-trees hide the little plastered church, of a quite uncanny whiteness.

The passage of the seasons can make little difference to the look of so stony a dale, except that the wide slopes of bracken that enclose it are russet in winter and green in summer. In spring, indeed, gorse and hawthorn are in flower along the lakeside; there are lambs whose woolly mothers usually seek repose against any gate across the road; there is the cuckoo calling, even among the crags, and on the A.A. notice that says (hideously) "Gates" beside Over Beck bridge a sandpiper stands, foolishly crying and quite untroubled by the passage of motors. And a week or two later foxgloves rise in triumphant flower through the growing bracken beside the lake. Then there is summer, grey with cloud, grey with rock, green with bracken, and warm with the scent of it, and then the bracken changes to russet and it is winter. The stony head of the dale lies patched and streaked with snow beneath a low roof of heavy cloud and the gayest creatures there are those gentlemen, heavy-booted, laden with ropes, who thread by stile and gap the labyrinth of stone walls and sodden little grass fields, bound for their blood-curdling enterprises among the precipices and snow-filled chimneys, the rakes and needles and pinnacles, of the crags of Scafell.

So it is by their stones that the Wasdale folk now gain much of their sustenance, and the old inn where Will Ritson was host has as lively a winter season (though

short) as a south coast resort, while all through the summer men and women, otherwise in no way extraordinary, come here to perform those evolutions upon the face of precipices that to the true climber bring a bliss that nothing else affords him. Indeed, the crags of Scafell, Pikes Crag, Great End, the Gable and Pillar Mountain are now so intimately known, so intersected with traverses and cracks and ledges, all named and set forth in the neatest of diagrams, so enlivened with buttresses and slabs and arêtes and chasms, deeply loved by climbers and of surpassing danger to all but the superlatively fit, that the high crags on a good climbing day at Christmas are more populous than the dale beneath. But apart from its satisfaction of this rare instinct (possessed only by the elect) for creeping on the edge of space, the stoniness of Wasdale has little profited its inhabitants.

Here at the head of the lake stand seven habitations. In 1819 there were six. Here also is a tiny church with an average congregation of six, and a tiny schoolhouse. In 1928 there were four scholars and, as the teacher had to walk from Nether Wasdale, school was held on only three days a week. One farm is also a hotel, one amid the dismal reedy flats nearer the lake is in ruins, of the others two are also boarding-houses, and the rest take in "visitors" during the very few weeks in the year when the ordinary tourist feels moved to stay at Wasdale Head. The ordinary tourist feels (rightly) that this dale is, by road, very far from the lands where tourists live, he thinks (wrongly) that it always rains there, and he is apt to feel oppressed (but this is entirely a matter of temperament), when he is

there, by mountain and by cloud. But there are others who are not oppressed, romantic others, who walk between the high stone walls of the lanes staring worshipfully up to where sunshine and wine-dark cloud shadows move upon Pillar Mountain, to where the grey crags of the Gable rise into a mystery that is half shadow, half cloud, or the Sty Head path slants upward into marching trails of storm that make it seem a pathway into the unknown. Moreover, the sun shines on Wasdale, often. Even from far off towards Gosforth faint dapplings of sunshine may be seen between the cloud shadows on the slopes of its mountains, and sometimes, but less often, the Wasdale skies are cloudless.

From the beginning the dalesfolk here have had to contend with stones and with cloud. So strewn was Wasdale Head with stones that with infinite labour they have been collected into great mounds, perhaps a dozen of which, each walled round and looking like some Stone Age dwelling, stand in the flat fields. In the little patches of plough-land smaller stones cover the soil with a pale layer. And whenever floods occur stones from the becks are strewn about in a vexatious way, while the crags still shed showers of rocks now and then, as happened in the spring of 1929, when, towards the lower end of the lake, an avalanche of stones swept down from Buckbarrow Pike, scattered the Herdwick sheep at a farm stock sale and stopped only just short of the farm itself and the main road. Moreover, above the stony soil of the dale hang, far too often, the clouds. Comparatively little sunshine, much rain, and in winter snow on the hills that keeps the dale full of a cold air

WASDALE HEAD AND WASTWATER FROM GREAT GABLE

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and a great raging of mountain streams, these are the results of the way the Scafell group breeds cloud. The dalesfolk grow, and in good years harvest, some twenty or thirty acres of hay. They keep a few cows. Oats are grown and, again only in good years, successfully gathered in before the autumn rains beat them into the ground. And, of course, there are sheep, Herdwick sheep, ranging the mountains up and over to the boundaries of those heafs that belong to the Langdale, Borrowdale, Ennerdale and Eskdale flocks.

To all these agricultural activities the stony soil, the bare and rocky hill-sides, the rain and lack of sun, are inimical. Yet in the old days people lived well in Wasdale. Undaunted by difficulties, yeoman families lived on here, generation after generation, till they became almost as much a part of the country-side as were their little customary holdings. The Fletchers of Wasdale, according to tradition, were here over seven hundred years ago. Green, in 1819, wrote that their ancestral farm was that of Burnthwaite at Wasdale Head. It is certain that the family was established in Wasdale by 1587, and that they lived comfortably is shown by the will of one Robert Fletcher, of Wasdale Head, who left in 1668 two hundred and ten sheep valued at 4s. 6d. each, and considerable other property as well. The family died out with the passing of old Christopher Fletcher of Church Style, Nether Wasdale, in 1897, but their long ancestry was shown by his having possessed over two hundred and fifty cousins. Nowadays it is well for the dale farmers that the modern love of mountains draws tourists here in moderate numbers. If with one of these little Wasdale farms is compared such a farm as that of

Butterilket in Eskdale, only some four miles away over the fells, the austerity of Wasdale may be the better realized. Butterilket, with its collection of spacious farm-buildings, looks almost as much of a hamlet as the whole settlement of Wasdale Head. Upper Eskdale is remote enough now, almost as remote as Wasdale, but the monks of Furness Abbey became owners of this farm of Butterilket in the thirteenth century and here it is still, set amidst river flats, and trees, and tall hedgerows, in a green and flowery land, while Wasdale was a deer forest as late as the seventeenth century. But, unlike Wasdale, Eskdale lies among fells that are relatively low, down to its meadows come slopes almost gentle that let in the sunshine and sea airs, and for all its present-day remoteness it stands beside the famous old Roman and pack-horse road that ran, as already noted, from Ravenglass and Eskdale over Hardknott and Wrynose to Ambleside.

In Wasdale man and his works are dwarfed, not only by mountains and wild weather, but by those activities of nature whose sudden violences townsfolk are apt to regard as belonging to a past age. Here in this deep valley are at work those natural changes of which we, of any one generation, see, and that dimly, but a fraction. We all know, though indeed we do not believe it, that, as the school-books tell us, mountains are day by day being removed and carried (certainly in little pieces) into the sea. It is a difficult thing to believe when the very solid crags of Scafell are contemplated, though the sight of the enormous collection of stones that the Lingmell Beck is slowly shepherding downwards from the heights should make the conception less incredible.

But what is more interesting to us short-lived mortals is the way in which the waste from the hills is distributed, strewn about, piled in heaps, extended in long lines, during its long passage from its parent crags. Here in the Wasdale district there are dry deltas, lake deltas, stream banks, acres of valley flats, square miles of scree, all built up of fragments, large and small, riven from the fells. And all of these forms which the mountain waste temporarily assumes are, like living things, subject to growth and decay; each passes through a cycle of stony changes, dependent on those greater and slower changes which are insensibly altering the country-side. At the moment there is the skeleton of a dry delta up on the slopes of Lingmell, stony fingers pointing out, fan shape, and each marking the inconstant bed of the mountain torrent whose waters, burdened with stones, periodically block their own course and seek another. This delta is a young thing. One day all its fingers will have coalesced into a fan-shaped slope of stones. One day, and that further off, its supply of stones will lessen and fail as the crags above are worn away, and the dry delta, subject to the weather like the rest of us, will itself begin to fade away, until at long last (if such a period ever arrive) it must be merged and lost in the general sheet of their own fragments that will then cover the diminished heads of the Scafell group.

At the moment, also, stream deltas are advancing from the shores and encroaching upon the horrid depths of Wastwater, blunt projections of shingle through which Nether Beck and Over Beck and the streams that drain down from the Burnmoor track emerge into the

lake. Small as they seem, fit haunts for frail things like sandpipers and campers, they will yet conquer the black and silent depths of this, the deepest, of the lakes. At the head of Wastwater may be seen work already accomplished by their greater brethren who gather, down Mosedale and Sty Head and Lingmell Gill, the waters from a huge mountain circle. Here is no definite forward bulge of delta, only a confusion of beaches and lagoon bars of shingle, but above the wandering and obstructed outlets of these streams lie reedy flats, still submerged (to the annoyance of Wasdale Head Hall, whose road of approach runs across them) in times of flood. The erratic courses of the streams over levels such as these are not likely to be restrained by the two concrete bridges erected during the war across their present channels. These flats are deltaic; they grew up in the lake margin and have been left stranded inland as the becks continued the good work of pushing the mountain waste out into the lake. And above them are the fields of Wasdale Head, and these also, a flat green floor between the mountain slopes, have been spread there by the streams, a gift of the gods of high places, welcome if stony, and upon them the true crag-climber may find sweet sleep, for beneath the Wasdale floors lie the shattered fragments from his beloved heights.

Thus, all this being as it is, the growing beaches at the head of the lake are simply the front line of that battle between lake and streams which must, century after century, be carried on further out into the lake. For deltas are (on lake shores) irresistible things and with Scafell and Gable and Pillar Mountain behind them the Wasdale Head streams must, in spite of the

wash of the lake waves, step by step extend the dale and, for the lake waters, give us land.

Then there are the Screes. There are, of course, vast sheets of scree covering the slopes of Kirkfell and of the Gable, of Yewbarrow and the Scafell heights, but it is only above the south-eastern shore of the lake that they are so developed as to be known as "the Screes". No one knows, or, at any rate, no one has seen fit to disclose, why there should be here such a remarkable growth of scree, except that the crags above them are known to be, perhaps exceptionally, easily disintegrated. Two huge bare fans of loose stone tilt down into the lake; between them are some ten or a dozen smaller fans, mostly more or less overgrown with bracken and isolated thorn bushes, and beyond them on either side are scree slopes, possibly older, that are green with fern and look relatively stable. The north-eastern bare fan is crossed at the foot by a narrow ribbon of path, showing that its slopes are more or less stationary. The smaller, intermediate, fans are so far consolidated that the wash of the lake waves has caused little landslips along their lower slopes, landslips the scars of which persist as would be impossible on loose scree. But the great south-western fan is bare of vegetation and so incoherent that it is impossible to make a path across it. On most of the screes are great boulders that look as if a touch would send them (as, indeed, it might) clattering down into the lake, but whose precarious balance shows that the slopes are not as steep as they appear to be from the opposite shore. Indeed, scree slopes are known seldom to exceed a gradient of thirty-six degrees.

Screes are one form in which fragments, worn from

the crags, are accumulated during their long journey towards lower levels. They are here still growing. Climbers who attempt the Great Gully and "C" Gully, that lie above the south-western screes, find that the climbs vary disconcertingly and frequently owing to rock falls, that the rocks are "repulsively loose", and the gullies in wet weather channels for raging streams. The rocks that feed the scree slopes are being rapidly disintegrated and, since the screes reach by now to the bottom of the lake, fresh supplies of stones must cause them to grow upwards until at last the crags themselves, shattered and wasted, and the whole hill-side up to the sky-line, must be buried in an even slope of scree. Already, particularly above the south-western bare screes, the gullies from which they draw their supplies of stones, as a stream of water would draw its converging tributaries, reach up to the sky-line. There is no fresh territory for them to tap. There remain now only the slow wastage of the crags between the branching gullies and the slow rise of scree that must eventually smother them in their own waste. The green covering of vegetation on some of the scree slopes shows that they have attained to that precarious condition of stability sometimes assumed by such accumulations when fresh supplies of débris are, at the moment, just balanced by wastage of the accumulation itself. These green screes of Wastwater are experiencing a pause in the long history of their development and bracken has had time to sink its widely ramifying roots among their stones, thus further consolidating the loose slope.

All these stony wastes of Wasdale, lines, and areas, and scattered patches of loose stones, reaching down the

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hill-sides from out of the low roof of heavy cloud, daily, like the shingle beaches of the sea-coast, suffer change in substance if not in form. They are lines of travel, not repose. Renewed from above and withdrawn from below, their supplies of stones only pause within their limits on their way to the lake and so the lake grows, century by century, a little shallower, a little smaller, and the stones shift, æon by æon, upon the hill slopes as if a wizard broom, old as the winds and the beating Wasdale rain, swept them now here, now there, in a perfect obedience to impulsions hidden from us. And amidst all these motions of cloud, and stone, and stream, the intrusion of man seems, indeed, a thing of small importance.

A flint arrowhead has been found on the Wasdale Screes. Did some hunter, superfluously indeed, drop it there? And if so, by what curious motions within the stony slopes has it been brought to the surface in our day? Or has it lain, all these centuries, unburied by fresh stones from above as bony fragments of extinct creatures lie yet unburied in the infinitely slow rain of particles that descends upon the floor of deep seas? Or did he drop it, as is no doubt most probable, among the crags above the screes?

Perhaps after him, perhaps before, people lived up Greendale in the steep valley between Buckbarrow and Long Crag. It is thought that they must have been British refugees, driven by the advancing Angles and Norsemen up into the mountain recesses, or shepherd thralls in the service of the invaders. Here in the stony wilderness—indeed the remains of their hut circles, and of a square building of some unknown significance stand on a dry delta of stony débris—they existed, no doubt,

by hunting the deer and other beasts that then roamed through Wasdale. After them came the Norsemen. They made their way up the dale in those days when, even yet, history had not begun in the Lake Country. They must have set up booths in what is now Bowderdale. They must have seen before them Heidhar-lang-hals, that "long hause of the heath" which we, now that there is a path over it, call Sty Head, the head of the sty or steep path. And in the long midsummer gloamings, from his summer shelter up Bowderdale, the Norse herdsman must have looked across the dark waters of the lake to the scree shore, a shore no lonelier then than now, and heard, as we do still, the utter stillness broken by that sudden thunder and clattering splash that mark the sliding of boulders down the screes and into the depths below; he must have seen with awe the vivid flashes and clouds of dust that, like fire and smoke, mark at night such a "breaking" of the screes as the dalesfolk predict will shortly happen again.

Long before the Norseman, long before man himself came to the dale, stones were sliding upon the screes. Long, indeed, after us will they go on sliding, for all the years of human history are but as a day in the life of the screes. Before man came the great hills were shedding stones down into the vale of Wasdale, and as generation after generation does its best to cope with them they will still come, moving down, sometimes secretly, sometimes with uproar, upon the dale. And if ever there comes a time when sheep and tourists fail the Wasdale farmers the stones will begin again to weave, unchecked, those patterns over the dale floor that they wove a thousand years ago.

CHAPTER VIII

SPRING AT BUTTERMERE: WOODS AND WATERS

The life of the inhabitants is purely pastoral. A few hands are employed in the slate quarries; the women spin woollen yarn and drink tea.—THOMAS WEST, 1778

AFTER Wasdale, Buttermere, but little less remote, seems a dale very flowery and full of trees. The hesitant entry of spring into the vale of Buttermere is, even in these days, troubled but by a cold nor'wester up the lakes or by the chill of a May snowfall on Red Pike and Great Gable. Wild hyacinths on the slopes of the valley behind Rannerdale Knotts brighten day by day, acres and acres of wild hyacinths that no one gathers. Across the dale near the end of Scale Bottom there is a dim pallor, of the same delicate hue as dew on flowering grasses, or the faint blue tinge that lies over screes in a clouded light. It shows where more acres of wild hyacinths are gradually opening into bloom, as untroubled by man as the cloud shadows, themselves blue as wood smoke, that pass over the slopes of Red Pike above. Up Honister Pass the wide slopes of bracken, still a faded russet, very clear and lovely beneath the soft grey of cloud, will soon be overspread, it seems in a night, with the green of uncurling fronds. The oak woods about Buttermere village are already green, with that

bright yellow-green that lies like sunlight on the woodlands, while across the valley the more backward oaks of Burtness Wood stand yet a dull bronze beneath the green of birches that climb boldly high up the exposed slopes. Just so, long ago, but in an even deeper silence of the wilderness, the oak woods of Buttermere and the bracken slopes above them grew green in the May sunshine when, in the twelfth century, the wild woods of this mountain valley were used but as a pasture for great flocks of pigs.

From the slopes of Scarf Gap cloud shadows and sunshine are seen to race, with a spectral urgency that is as old as the winds, over the green flats of Warnscale Bottom, at the head of Buttermere, alluvial flats where generations of Gatesgarth farmers have pastured their lambing ewes in spring. Now, in the fleeting breadths of light and spaces of dim shadow, the old farm and its group of trees stand one moment clear in a golden light and then fade into a grey obscurity; mother sheep and lambs, each with its little shadow dark beside it, graze far below, and then a cloud sweeps over and they and their ancient pastures pass into a clear gloom. Here it is quiet with a quietness that is older than man. Then from high against the clouded sky comes a far croaking of ravens. Their nesting finished weeks ago, they show as black specks flying about the precipices and their faint and hoarse cries sink down into the silence of this great hollow and seem to become a part of it, for, indeed, ravens croaked and flew about Warnscale Bottom long before man came and brought with him his spring-time harvest of lambs. Across the lake the cuckoo, earliest off-come of us all, sounds his alien cry,

BUTTERMERE LAKE, HIGH CRAG AND HIGH STILE

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and a heron, perhaps unconsciously disturbed by these foreign outcries, rises from the lake shore and flies, wide-winged and heavily, low above the dark green water to the Hassness woods. But the eagles are gone, defeated by sheep. They nested in Burtness Cove and ate the Gatesgarth lambs. So, about 1790, they were shot and their splendid wings no longer cast flying shadows on the lake.

The eagles are gone, but here at Buttermere lingers something of the old Lake District life, a life less changed in its essentials than appears to the casual observer and upon whose spring quietness breaks (except at Easter and Whitsuntide) but these voices of birds, the small cries of new-born lambs, and the unchanging sounds of wind and water. It is ten miles to the railway at Cockermouth, and for all practical purposes there is only one line of road that joins Buttermere to the outside world—a road that is so far unspoilt by those who think in terms of motor-coaches and hence that is still unsuited for heavy traffic. Indeed, even one great charabanc nosing its way round Hause Point above Crummock Water is a sufficiently awe-inspiring spectacle for the pedestrian, thus impelled to choose between climbing its radiator, or the roadside cliff, or the stone wall. In summer motorists often enough make the journey between Keswick and Buttermere by Newlands Pass, and, less often, from Borrowdale by Honister Pass, but the latter of these involves a "freak" descent of what resembles a torrent bed rather than a road, and even the former requires skilful driving. Over both in the tourist season pass daily horse-drawn charabancs but apart from the tourists thus let loose at Buttermere

for a few hours in the middle of the day these passes at present do little to break the rural silence of the vale.

To its first settlers (whoever they may have been) the site of Buttermere village must have made a very different appeal. To them it may well have appeared something of a route junction, for here the easy way by the vale of Newlands joins the valley track up from the vale of Lorton, which itself, by the low gap of Honister Pass, and by Scarf Gap Pass, communicates with Borrowdale and with upper Ennerdale. Moreover, across the flats between the two lakes a way leads by Scale Bottom and over by Floutern Tarn to the low country about the foot of Ennerdale, and in early times, the transport of heavy goods along the rough road beside Crummock Water and over the ridge behind Hause Point was, no doubt, supplemented by boat up the lake. Thus the early villagers were isolated rather by distance than by local difficulties of communication, but they had little enough need for access to the outer world in those days, and almost all their wants could be supplied in the immediate neighbourhood of the village.

The few houses of Buttermere stand on the lower slopes where the Newlands track and the Mill Beck come down to the main valley, on the sunny side of the dale and with to the west the gap of the Scale Beck valley to let in the afternoon sunshine. Below the village lie the green flats of rich alluvial soil that separate Crummock from Buttermere, so here was that rare thing at the Lakes, ground at once flat and fertile, and here, where Buttermere grows its oats to-day, the early settlers must have raised their crops of oats, and barley,

and hemp. There was water-power from the beck that turned the corn-mill of which traces can still be seen above the Victoria Hotel, and of fuel they must have had an ample supply, both peat—until motor-lorries of coal from Cockermouth made it not worth the getting —and wood.

Across the flat land between the lakes a stone bridge spans the slow and weedy waters of the Cocker Beck, a bridge that in 1819 was made of wood. To the summer off-come it seems to lead nowhere, but it fulfils a purpose that is hidden from him. Across it the villagers of Buttermere cart their supplies of firewood from the steep slopes of Burtness Wood, though the wood is quiet enough in May, when the sap is rising in the trees and the sweet heavy scent of flowering rowan hangs in the still air, since sap-wood, unless burnt green, falls away to touchwood after felling.

Even in the comparatively treeless head of the dale the Gatesgarth folk get firewood in plenty from a little wood in Warnscale Bottom, and there still remain in the Buttermere district enough woodlands to make the wanderer realize a little what the valley was like when it was filled with native woods of oak, and ash, and birch, that grew to their prime, decayed, and rotted unseen by man. These spring woodlands at Buttermere rouse pensive reflections on the patriotic and altogether meritorious efforts of the Forestry Commissioners at the Lakes. In the neighbourhood of Thornthwaite, a hamlet on the road from Braithwaite along Bassenthwaite Lake, there is one centre of forestry activity, and the other area acquired by the Commissioners is in Ennerdale. On the Thornthwaite fells areas of forest

cut down in the war are being replanted, and here one day will stand great woods of larch, Douglas fir, and spruce. Some pines are also being planted, but only a negligible acre or two of deciduous hardwood trees. The planting extends to the Whinlatter Pass, and here in this wind-swept defile, now so bare between its grassy slopes, are to be found the cottages of Forestry small-holders, looking singularly desolate at present in the mountain wilderness, and on the peaty bottom at the top of the pass Giant Thuyas and Sitka spruces are being planted. Experiments in planting peat with spruce are being made elsewhere at the Lakes, so that one day those rainy deserts, peat bogs, which have so often defied all man's attempts to reclaim them, may be replaced here by the sombre ranks of spruce woods. On some of the Lake fells, however, noticeably on the Haystacks above Buttermere, there have been signs that changes affecting the growth of peat are in progress. Old peat bogs have shrunk, the peat has cracked and been reduced to isolated masses between which the waters of the tarn, that filled the little hollow before the growth of peat extinguished it, have once again appeared.

In Ennerdale the fell slopes now being afforested have not, in historic times at least, been under wood. Here by far the greater number of the new young trees are spruce, with a small proportion of pines and a few thousand beeches only among hundreds of thousands of spruce. To west of the footpath up the dale, and as far up it as the Black Sail Pass footpath, the floor of the valley and the fell slopes up to about twelve hundred feet will one day be a coniferous forest, while in the

dale near Gillerthwaite are to be set down the buildings and agricultural enclosures of the eight or nine Forestry small-holders. At present four Forestry cottages have been built. That these men will be able to make a living in a dale that has for very many years sufficed to support but one farm is due, of course, to the fact that they find employment for at least a hundred and fifty days a year on forestry work; indeed, the Forestry Commissioners claim that afforested land provides work for some ten men where the old system of fell sheep-farming supported but one.

The forestry activities of the Manchester Corporation round their great reservoir of Thirlmere have now been in progress for some thirty years, and though there is an undoubted charm in the dark mystery of the close-set firwoods, in the ruddy colour of the Japanese larch twigs in spring and the dull gold needles they shower over the road in autumn, yet they seem uncanny things, these alien woodlands. Very orderly, excellently managed, producing a crop where before there was never a harvest save for the wool and mutton of the few sheep that found a living on these steep pastures, performing, perhaps, those mysterious functions for the good of the water supply which it is not yet fully established that forests do perform, yet who would not exchange them for the native oak woods that climb the western fells near the dam? For these old woods are wild, and open, and sunlit, full of dewy scents and grey rocks, and between their trunks shine the quiet waters of the lake and the first autumn snows on Helvellyn. They are one with the fells, a growth as natural as the bent grass through which the wind sings higher up the slopes,

but they are doomed. Like children of the mist they will, in fullness of time, pass; their timber into Manchester's saw mill at Legberthwaite, their tawny autumn glow into the past, and the loss of them, and of their acorns, will help to accentuate that future famine in home-grown oak that their evergreen successors will do nothing to assuage.

It is not, of course, only in the Lake Country that the great demand for softwoods is changing the character of our woodlands: in Wales, for example, acres and acres of oak woods are now being felled to make room for conifers. But that makes it no happier for those of us who hate to see these growing patches spread, sombre in winter, no less sombre in summer, dark as symmetrical cloud-shadows over the fells. And with them come changes, no more welcome, in the bird life of the district.

Reflections on the new forests about Thirlmere bring to mind other of Manchester's works in the Lake Country. The use of the high-lying, rainy valleys of this district as reservoirs for the water supply of distant towns is one more example of the extension of urban influences over a country-side once remote from them. No doubt there must, at present, be towns; no doubt they must have water and not, like mediæval Liverpool, be satisfied with one tap for twelve houses; there is no doubt, also, that they are perfectly justified in drawing water to themselves through miles and miles of pipes from anywhere they can get it. But it is greatly to be desired that they would refrain from saying that they thereby improve the scenery. Manchester claims that she has improved Thirlmere and that she is going to improve

the scenic features of Haweswater. It all depends, of course, on what is regarded as improvement. To many people a big lake is necessarily more beautiful than a smaller one; to many people easier access more than makes up for a loss in wildness. But when Manchester builds her dams, and thereby upsets those most delicate adjustments between stream and slope and lake level that nature has been in process of establishing since the first rain fell on the beginnings of the Lake District; when, so doing, she destroys the old shore-line, moulded by unknown ages of wave and wind action, and substitutes for it a bald junction where the raised waters wash for years in a queer, helpless way against the unfamiliar land; when she drowns old houses, old roads, relics of a forgotten time like the wooden footbridge that once crossed Thirlmere; then there is, indeed, no shadow of need for her to apologize, but there is still less call for self-congratulation save for an engineers' job well done.

The worst that can befall Thirlmere has befallen it. It has been raised to the highest level made possible by the dam. The old Cherry Tree Inn of Wordsworth's day, that lay a little north of Wythburn; the green flats that stretched from the Nag's Head for a mile down to the old head of the lake; the lovely old cart-road along the western shore; Armboth Hall and the footbridge, already mentioned, that here gave access across a narrowing of this once "ant-like" lake to Dale Head Hall; all these are gone. Even the Nag's Head, in spite of the strongest local protests, has now been closed and there is no inn between Grasmere and Thirlspot. Over the lake now lies the artificial stillness, the enforced loneliness, the strange,

uneasy sense of a past broken off short which seems to haunt all such water-supply areas. Unnaturally swollen the lake lies; too big for its basin; out of all proportion with the contours and levels towards its lower end; a thing abnormal. In dry weather Manchester ceases not to drink and wash, and so the water sinks and exposes breadths of drowned slopes, bleached and hideous, along its banks. Into it fall, headlong, streams, unnaturally shortened, while beneath it dip lines of old walls, fragments of the old road, sheepfolds, all the network, now meaningless, of man's activities in this great hollow that still, in spite of Manchester, is as a whole so lovely.

Now the work of devastation has begun at Haweswater, and in a few years, before 1934 at latest, it, and Mardale, will be sunk fathoms deep in a pool of their own rain-water.

At Buttermere so far is no threat of alien forests or of waterworks. Here there is little change, generation after generation. In spite of all its amenities and of the activities of Dutch miners from Keswick—one Andreas Torer (whose wife was named Aprell) turned out in 1569 "120 kibbles of massy ore" at Buttermere—the village remained small and the predecessor of the present little church, built in 1841, could hold only six households. Its priest was paid 20s. yearly, but he received in addition payment as school-teacher and, in kind, of clogg shoes, whittlegate, harden sark, and guse gate, which means that he also got footwear, his meals, some clothing, and room for his goose on the common. Set in the midst of mountains, remote from all centres of population and with only a very limited area of fertile

land, it was impossible for a purely agricultural and pastoral community such as this (for only a few men worked in the Honister Crag slate quarries, that had begun operations by the middle of the eighteenth century) to support more than a few households. It is still impossible.

So it comes about that in 1778 there were sixteen houses in Buttermere village while to-day there are but eighteen, and some of these belong to off-comes who earn their victuals elsewhere. No newspapers can be bought there, and no tea, or sugar, or flour, for there is no shop. Letters are delivered, by the driver of the red mail-van, some time in the middle of the morning. No motor-bus penetrates to the village, wherefore people who live in Buttermere can still walk. A Buttermere girl intent on a day's outing thinks nothing of walking, all alone, eight miles by Newlands Pass to Keswick and eight miles back when the urban delights of the day are over, or, if she live higher up the valley, an hour and a half's tramp over Honister Pass to catch the Keswick bus at Seatoller, with a similar steep and stony walk at the end of the day, seems to her a very ordinary accompaniment of a day's pleasuring.

Here in Buttermere, as in most quiet Lakeland hamlets, the same families go on living from generation to generation. Memories are long here. Only the other day a middle-aged off-come, with that love of the Lakes that comes partly from inherited tastes and partly from the early knowledge of the region necessarily acquired by the children of Lake Country lovers, found himself placed at the hotel dinner beneath a portrait of his grandfather. This grandfather of his had been one of

the early visitors to Buttermere, and had died before he was born, yet up the valley at Gatesgarth the farmer said tranquilly, later that evening: "Ay—ay—I mind your grandfather well."

Indeed, the whole vale of the Cocker from its small beginnings up on Honister down to Lorton village is singularly unspoilt at present, and even the petrol pumps at Lorton are but a very localized (though vivid) reminder of modern things, and the greenness of May closes over them from but a few yards away. The tributary vale of Loweswater leads nowhere in particular, and on a May morning of showers and sunshine it too lies in a fragrant silence, a stillness full of the scent of flowering rowan and hawthorn and the wild, faint breath of the wet roadside ferns. At the village of Loweswater converge six dales, but of these three lead but into the wilderness towards Ennerdale Water and from the other three, Crummock and Loweswater and the vale of Lorton, comes little traffic to disturb the spring quiet. Even in August nine motorists out of ten leave Loweswater on one side and go straight up from Lorton to Buttermere. So here on the green lands between Crummock and Loweswater there is still peace, and roads that are winding and unspoilt, a lowland peace that seems the flowerier and more sunlit for the great hills that overlook it. For the dark cone of Mellbreak stands between Loweswater and the south, and to the south-east, beyond its green fields and hedgerows, glittering in sunshine after a shower, Grasmoor and Red Pike rise up into a clear and brooding darkness, a darkness that seems like the shadow of forgotten things, of griefs old and unchanging as the burial

mounds that mark the unknown dead on Carling Knott and Grasmoor.

Then another shower, dim with soft, thick rain, comes up the vale of Lorton, the golden light is drowned, and from a watery gloom Loweswater sees the moving sunshine light Great Gable, a far, mountain sunshine, clear and thin as the hill air. So, perhaps, long ago, hard-pressed folk looked up to the untroubled heights when those various kinds of tumult rent the dale that made the ramparted British settlements, of which faint traces remain at Bargate and Lanthwaite Green, comfortable things to retire into, or when the Lindsays regarded across their moat at Peel robbers, or an irritated selection of their relatives, embittered by one of the family feuds that kept manor houses lively up here in the fifteenth century.

Nowadays a wealthier gift than peace from raiding enemies has come to Buttermere. Of all the old resources of the place, none has proved so valuable as its mountain scenery. In the season nearly the whole population is engaged in ministering to tourists, and the road traffic along the lakes is sufficient to support gate-openers and their attendant bracken-thatched booths at each gate. Indeed, that near Hassness is generally in charge of a vagrant who lives (figuratively) on the gate, cooking his meals over a little fire in the wood and sleeping sometimes in an ancient and abandoned carriage, and sometimes who knows where?

Yet at evening, and particularly in the long twilights of May, the vale of Buttermere seems to sink back into the shadows of the past. After a wet day, when the sky has cleared and mists have steamed in hot sunshine

about the wet ridges and hollows of High Style, pale vaporous things streaming up like the breath of the mountains, there comes a time of sunset, cloudless, calm, as glowing as it is still. Then the waters at the head of Crummock fade slowly from a vivid blue to a pale shining. In the green flats between the lakes hedgerow shadows reach right across the fields, and the beck flows through them, already sunless and gleaming with a wild and lonely light. The waters of Buttermere beneath their climbing fir-wood darken to a gloomier and secret green. Mellbreak, against the sunset, stands black as night and its shadow rises higher and higher on Buttermere Fell, until at last only vague purple lights of the afterglow dwell on the dark crags of Brandreth and the far, clear summit of Great Gable. And as the sunset withdraws itself and lingers but in the gap above Crummock Water a dusk fills the vale which seems, in its lucent clearness, like a cloud shadow that broods, without perceptible deepening, on lakes and fells, and with it come dreams of those old days when in shadow of cloud, and of wild woods, and of the unknown, Celt and Norseman and Norman trod the dale.

CHAPTER IX

THE WOODS OF LAKELAND: CONISTON AND HIGH FURNESS

Such was the ancient face of Furness; such was the condition in which the first settlers found it. The forest-trees, the fir, the oak, and birch, had skirted the fells, tufted the hills, and shaded the valleys, through many centuries of silent solitude.—THOMAS WEST

HERE at Coniston there is not that triumphant, defiant splendour of scenery that is apt, as at Ullswater, to baffle the flow of easy description in even the most hardened writer. There is quietness at Coniston. The queer, sleepy little village is away from the lake, whose waters lie amidst low fells sufficiently monotonous in their aspect to give full value to every brightness and shadowing of the great sheet of water, and every stirring of wind and sunshine through its ancient coppice woods. The weather marches grandly over Coniston Water. Out of the broad west above the moors of Blawith Fells comes the grey mist from the sea, rising as a dimness in the sunlit sky, sending before it a shadow that dims the lake to the shimmer of grey silk, though the sunshine still falls through the hazel saplings that stand along the eastern beaches, and sparkles on the ripples that come ashore there with a ceaseless murmur. The

brassy haze of coming thunder is never so ominous as when seen from the lower end of the lake so to dim the great cone of the Old Man and the wild upland of Walna Scar that they stand as bodiless silhouettes, less substantial than the white thread of a waterfall that hangs, silent with distance, across the slopes of the Old Man.

The changing seasons, too, at Coniston pass with full pomp and colour over the open country-side. In the stillness of a May morning when the wild cherries are in flower at Water Yeat, and the river Crake flows noiseless through meadows grey with dew; in October when those same cherries stand of so clear a red that it seems a lamp must be shining through their pointed scarlet leaves, and the sunlit bracken on Torver Common and the hazel coppices of Rigg Wood are of so vivid a russet that the blue waters of the lake between them look dark and clear as the sea; in winter when the light of sunrise lies rose-red on the snows of the Old Man above the frosty shadows of the vale, then even an off-come may realize something of the longing with which Ruskin, very ill while away from here, said, "If only I could lie down beneath the crags of Coniston!"

There was nobody to record the history of the beginnings of Coniston. The whole region, save for the higher fells and the shining levels of the lake, was buried in woodland, lost amid a waste of hills and moors, and quite remote from the common ways of travelling man. The ancient people lived on the uplands, on the Blawith moors, the Monk Coniston moors, the Torver moors, where lie to-day the confused fragments of their garths and graves and hut circles. So, they were lifted above the tangled forest that must have filled the valley with the

surf-like murmur of its passing winds. For here at Coniston, as over the whole Lake Country, the natural vegetation was trees. There were always bare spaces, where the higher summits rose, austere and rocky, where crags and shifting screes broke the lower slopes, and where the long contest between woodland and swamp had ended in victory for the latter, but otherwise the soil bred trees. It does so still. Seedling birches grow with incredible speed, and once an area is enclosed from grazing sheep, form in a few years a dense thicket of man-high stems. Even oaks grow quickly here, and from the thin soil of rocky slopes yew-trees draw through the centuries such nourishment as swells them to prodigious bulk. If trees at the Lakes were not felled, polled, topped, grubbed up, as a regular part of the year's work on the land, the views from the dales would soon be gone, hidden behind a thickening maze of branches.

But even the untouched forests of early days lived, like all wild things, but by virtue of a ceaseless struggle. The woods had many enemies. The steepness of many of the fell slopes and the unfinished condition in which the vanishing glaciers of the Ice Age left the countryside, a landscape moulded to the impress of ice and on which the running waters had to begin anew their modelling work, were against trees. The very soil on the fell-sides crept and still creeps towards the dales; landslips from slopes still seeking equilibrium tumbled trees and rocks together in ruin; floods and gales wasted the primitive woods with the same fury as they sweep the bare fell-sides of to-day. On the higher uplands the woods were defeated in most places by the time that men of the New Stone Age came here, and their corpses

lie, great trunks of oak and fir, preserved in the peat mosses of moors such as Blawith Fells, about the lower end of Coniston Water. In a climate damp and mild like that of the Lake Country, peat menaces tree growth from the dale bottoms to the fell tops wherever the drainage of the surface waters is obstructed, and these old high woods died at last, poisoned by the acids of the peat that had thickened about their roots and with their heads laid to the east by the gale that finally uprooted them. Down in the dales, too, the insidious spread of peat, fostered by the decay of old trees, fallen and rotting on the damp ground, gradually in low-lying bottoms strangled the woods, but it was on the fells that the greatest enemy of trees—wind—was felt in full force. It was wind, and it still is wind, that limits the upward spread of forests at the Lakes. There seems no reason why trees should not grow, where there is soil, to the tops of the highest fells at the Lakes, were it not for wind. Above Keskedale farm, up the vale of Newlands from Keswick, there stands in a hollow in the fell slope a remnant of the native oak woods, the "Keskettle Yaks". The ground slopes, but the tops of all the climbing trees reach but the one level, that where the wind, sweeping across the depression, cuts off any attempt at a higher growth. The brutal force of the wind, its drying effect, the keen edge it gives to frost, all make it, above a level varying with the degree of exposure, the master of the trees. And so the fell tops are bare and the mountain ringlet butterfly, on the Coniston and other of the Lake hills, flutters through what must, it seems, be an austere life above two thousand feet up, free of any shadow of tangled branches between it and the sky.

But the Lake woods had another foe, vastly quicker

in destruction than any of those natural enemies and protracted vegetable conflicts that afflicted the primitive forests here. Man came, seeking food and shelter, and once the rigorous life on the uplands failed to suffice him he could win both but at the expense of the woods. As into a green sea he plunged down into the wilderness of trees; cut himself a clearing; built himself a house of wood; and proceeded, like an internal parasite, to eat into his sheltering host. When, before the Conquest, Norsemen settled in Furness Fells and about the great lake that was thereafter known as Thorstanes Watter, there were in the vale of Coniston and on the lower fells dense growths of oak and holly, ash and hazel, and birch and thorn, both timber trees and undergrowth. Yet by the sixteenth century of its great oak woods there remained but a few scattered trees and the enormous beams in such buildings, then already old, as Coniston Old Hall and certain substantial farm-houses, for in the time of Henry VIII Coniston and all Furness Fells were almost bare of timber. The forests were almost gone. There was much underwood, "lytell short Okes", hazel and holly and birch, but "no Tymber of any valewe".

The Norse settlers must have made some small inroads on the woods here, but it was the monks who began this rapid destruction of forests that had existed, with ups and downs like the rest of us, no doubt, since trees came straggling back to the Lake Country after the close of the Ice Age. Furness Abbey was founded in 1127. To it were given Furness Fells, that space of lonely upland that lies between Coniston Water and the lake of Windermere. By 1240, in which year they were granted the right of using the lake of Coniston to trans-

port their goods, the monks were actively engaged in getting timber from the forests of their wilderness holding. The wood from Furness Fells and timber for building was boated down the lake, and so out to the lower and cultivated lands of Low Furness. Much of the wood they used on the spot. It was burned into charcoal, and the charcoal was used to smelt the iron ore of Low Furness at many little forges or bloomeries that were scattered about on the east side of the lake. There were such forges along the opposite shore also, though these did not belong to Furness Abbey; some six or eight in the valley of Coniston away from the lake, and at least fifteen in the remaining area of Furness Fells. The woods must have shrunk like snow in sunshine, for wood from more than an acre of forest was required for the smelting of two tons of ore. In the fourteenth century the Abbey found it worth while to establish the three sheep-farms of Waterpark, Parkamoor, and Lawson Park in clearings of their diminishing woodlands above the eastern shore of the lake, and almost certainly by this time they had a monk settled beyond Monk Coniston moor as steward of their surrounding property at Hawkshead Hall. So to forest products the Abbey added wool, and, at least from the fertile Hawkshead valley, corn. Yet Furness Fells remained largely under wood, and the haunt of outlaws and robbers, "Fellows fierce from Furness Fells", while there had grown up here, by the time when Henry VIII took possession of the Abbey property, the beginnings of those wood-working industries, the making of saddle-trees, cups, dishes, cartwheels, and the like, which have survived in some form into our own time.

But the wastage of what woods remained went on after the dissolution of the monasteries. In the sixteenth century, and even later, much of the Lake Country was still forested. There were oak forests about Derwentwater, and much ash and birch as well; forests in Borrowdale; forests of sorts at Coniston, where the Company of Mines Royal, working the copper-mines in the Old Man, found plenty of wood still in the middle of the sixteenth century; forests in much of the Rothay valley and about Windermere; primæval oak woods at Buttermere and forests down to the edge of the sea along the western margin of the Lake mountains; behind Skiddaw great stretches of forest where the barons of Greystoke "suffered the porklins to run wild in the woods", while about Caldbeck thieves of the woods and great large deer still lodged in the forest. Not long, however, did these remaining woodlands survive. The farmers destroyed them; the lords of the manor cut trees without re-planting; mining concerns consumed vast acreages of them. As early as 1565 the copper-smelting works at Keswick began to find a difficulty in getting as much wood and charcoal as they wanted, and a century later a traveller found the works dismantled and "the woods gone". Later still, in the eighteenth century, writers comment on the singular lack of wood at the Lakes: iron forges closed for want of charcoal and were removed to the Scottish Highlands: wood had to be brought from Norway to Furness: and the authors of the *County History of Westmoreland* thought that all the woods must have been cut down to deprive the marauding Scots of places of shelter and concealment.

So passed from the Lake Country its native forests.

Yet in many parts of the district, and particularly on the fells of Coniston and High Furness, the vanished woods left behind them, as it were, a dwarfed and distorted shadow of themselves. They were destroyed, but from the great stubs of their fallen trunks, from the soil that was thick with their tangled roots, sprang a growth of coppice wood—wood harvested like a crop every fifteen or twenty years, and as constantly renewed. The coppice woods of High Furness have had a history as chequered as the sunshine and shadow that flickers all through them when wind and sunshine pass over Rusland and Graythwaite, Grisedale and Coniston. They have been a nuisance, in earlier days to sheep-farmers eagerly seeking to extend their area of pasturage, at present to landowners who do not know what to do with them. They have been jealously preserved, and areas not under coppice have even been enclosed and allowed to become overgrown with wood, particularly in those days in the eighteenth century when a revival of iron smelting in the neighbourhood led to a great demand for charcoal, and when the gunpowder-works, such as those at Elterwater and Blackbeck and Lowwood on the lower Leven, used charcoal made in the local woods. And when charcoal was no longer in much demand the looms of the Lancashire mills, in the lusty infancy of the cotton industry, needed wood bobbins, and bobbin-mills, like that on the Cunsey Beck below Esthwaite Water and the old mill near Hawkshead Hall, used enormous quantities of the wood cut from the oak and hazel coppices.

Now, however, the harvesting of the coppice crop of wood no longer pays. Since about 1900 there has come about an almost complete collapse of the Furness Fells

CHARCOAL BURNING IN THE VALE OF RUSLAND

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coppice industry, a collapse induced by all kinds of factors, most of them connected with those affairs of the industrial world, and international communications, that are as remote from Furness as the smoke of a cotton town is from that clear blue shadow from the midst of which the Old Man looks down into the sunlit green and gold of the vale of Rusland. Some small amount of coppice wood is still cut and used for firewood, and by the very few workers who still make oak spelk baskets or "swills", and the hoops for gunpowder casks. Local charcoal is no longer used either at the Backbarrow steel-works or in the manufacture of gunpowder, and charcoal burning is almost extinct in the district. Some very small amount of wood is still "coaled", however, for other purposes, and it is understood that coppice at the southern end of Windermere is being cut and piled ready for being burned into charcoal in the late summer of this year. "Coaling" is a skilled and exacting business which necessitates the charcoal burners living in the woods in primitive shelters beside the great piles of smouldering wood, that are covered with grass, rushes, and damp earth to check combustion. The "coaling" season lasts for two or three weeks. Such precarious survivals of the old woodland industries do not justify the continued existence of coppice woods, but coppice is not easily destroyed. Some local landowners stipulate, on selling coppice for felling, that certain marked trees shall be left to grow. In time these "spires" or "standers" will so overshadow the undergrowth that the coppice wood must die out and be replaced by an open forest of timber trees. Thus it may come about that the forests of High Furness, kept under for many

centuries of inordinate felling and encouragement of coppice, may reclaim their old domain, and a pre-reformation landscape gradually shape itself anew out of the soil, and the hills, and the rains, that are the same as when they bred the forests of long ago.

At present, however, there are still very many acres of coppice wood on the fells between Coniston and Windermere, and, besides, great breadths of potential forests, so that in spring the fell slopes are a-glitter with the sunlit greenery of birch woods like those on the western slopes of the vale of Rusland, while across the valley piles of "yardings", branches an inch thick and three feet long, cut in the winter coppice woods for firewood, show black in the cleared spaces. Further on young oak woods, just bursting into golden leaf, climb the eastern side of the vale, and over in Finsthwaite foxgloves lift their solemn purple spires, rank after rank of them, all up a recently cleared hill-side above the Lake-side road, while through coppice still uncut the ancient track from Newby Bridge up and over to Finsthwaite village runs dark as a tunnel, overarched by a tangle of hazel branches. Between the bare moorland summits and the green meadows of the dale bottoms grow these woodlands, lying on the slopes like a haze, dusky in winter, green in summer, tawny-gold in autumn, and the haunt, once again, of deer, who after nightfall sometimes cause traffic complications on the Graythwaite roads. To anyone who likes the scent of moss and fern, the shadow and silence of woods, the queer, solemn shapes of distant mountains peering over the moors into some woodland glade, a holiday spent in searching for hut circles, and ancient garths, Viking graves and charcoal-pits buried

among the trees of Furness Fells, would be a holiday indeed.

The men of the Lakes destroyed their forests, but these latter in their passing came near sometimes to destroying their murderers. The woods were a long time a-dying, and all through the centuries of their disappearance they plagued Lake-Country man, and involved him in a succession of furious disputes, as if revengeful wood sprites cast a tangled shadow athwart his affairs.

The forests were as essential to the daily needs of the dalesfolk as the rain that kept their pastures green and the precious mountain sunshine that ripened their corn. From the forests came the timber that, in early days, built their houses—houses of "crucks" or forked timbers upon whose sharp arch was laid thatch, and against which, between a dwarf wall and the roof, was in High Furness probably piled turf. These simple erections gave way soon to stone houses, though cottages continued probably to be built in the old way until much later, but even stone houses needed timber for floors and beams and joists. Wood from timber trees was necessary too for furniture, for table utensils, for the making of farm implements, for fences and gates. Branches, the decayed wood of what used to be called "dotard" oaks, loppings and toppings, and all the woody waste from trees and undergrowth, were precious to the dalesfolk as fuel for hearth and charcoal-pit, while leaves and bark and twigs supplied a source of food for which there was then no substitute for their beasts. So it came about that the use of the forests had to be hedged about with rules and restrictions as complicated and severe as those with which the ancient Egyptians governed the distribution of the

Nile water. The lord of the manor sought to restrict his tenants' forest rights. His tenants disputed their lord's rights, and besides fought violently among themselves over such irritating topics as claims to timber on another man's land, the carrying and dragging of wood across each other's fields, the constant tendency of unregenerate man (and woman) to gather firewood not their own, and fell trees set temptingly just in the boundary fence of the protesting owner of the further half of them.

There was no end to the quarrels and lawsuits due to the forests, as there seemed no end to the possible causes of aggravation that they engendered. The lord might not sell or destroy a forest. So when Charles II as lord of the manor sought to sell a wood in Loughrigg the tenants successfully opposed his action, and in Borrowdale, when Walter Graime sought to sell woods in Watendleth and Stonethwaite to a mining company in 1600, the tenants again prevented the sale, very wisely. But the lord had plenty of opportunities to make himself unpleasant about his trees. As long as Troutbeck (Westmorland) and Ambleside were enclosed by deer forests each household was entitled to wood for but one hearth. Tenants of Windermere were forbidden to burn charcoal in the woods, and in the days when farmers quite commonly forged their own implements it was natural that they should want to burn charcoal. Then when the tenants, unable, as happened at one time at Coniston, to get it from their own holdings, claimed timber from the lord's demesne for the repair of their customary houses, the lord tried to prevent them from getting it, and offered plots of coppice wood instead, and who could get oak beams from coppice wood?

Moreover, tenants were generally not allowed to fell timber without special permission, but only to cut branches from above some specified height above the ground. Old trees with something of the curiously surprised aspect of pollarded willows show still, at Rydal in the woods of the Nab, and on Loughrigg, the effect of this long past lopping and topping above some ten feet from the ground, while at Coniston in the seventeenth century it is recorded there was but one whole-branched, uncut tree in the valley. As late as Wordsworth's day a contest about this developed, of a truly faun-like violence, between the then owner of Rydal Mount and the lady of the manor. Mr. North at Rydal Mount said that he had the right to lop and top trees on the common land of Nab Scar, though Rydal manor might fell them. So man and manor set to, hired gangs of labourers who lopped and topped the trees (for Mr. North) and felled them (for the manor), all in feverish haste to get the lopping done before the felling, and the felling before the lopping. And walking through the scene of ruin Dorothy Wordsworth laments that "such wicked passions" should have been let loose among her beloved and ancient trees.

But wicked passions undoubtedly lurked in the green woodland shades. In 1585 the tenants of Furness were forbidden any longer to cut any timber without "deliverie of the baieliff", or to top young saplings, or to carry away "anie other man's ellers, hollings, garthings, or other woods". And in 1633 a controversy was, it is recorded, likely to grow "amongst some of the Tenants of Amblesyde tuchinge the grubbing of there Woods", and in the future positively no one was to take any timber from another man's tenement. Tenants would

let pigs run loose in the forests, and persisted in carrying off acorns and beech-mast, and the whole thing was complicated often by the woods belonging to one man, and the ground they grew on to another. So it went on, and as the forests shrank so the quarrels grew more bitter over the increasingly scarce supplies of wood, until in the early eighteenth century the lady of the manor dared not cut timber for herself on her own lands round about Ambleside, while her tenants claimed shares or "dales" of woodland in the midst of her property and came and cut her trees and broke down her walls. And at Rydal it was a dispute over their claimed right to cut timber on their own farm holding, for the building of a new barn, that led to a long lawsuit and the final ruin of the Park family of Nab Cottage, and to their expulsion from their ancestral homestead in 1834.

Thus the vanishing forests of the Lake Country passed not without a sad clamour and commotion among their human neighbours, and forests must rank with the common grazing land as a source of ceaseless "fratching" between the dalesfolk of old. In the vale of Coniston and on Furness Fells this neighbourly bickering was perhaps somewhat made up for by the prosperity of the local industries that depended on supplies of wood, but the woodlands of High Furness could not in the long run save a people that had long outgrown the independent self-sufficiency of their Norse forefathers, and, indeed, it was rather in spite of the forests than with their aid that little townships grew up at Hawkshead and at Coniston. By 1200 Hauk's satter, the summer pasture or shieling of some Norseman Hauk, was become sufficient of a little town to have a chapel

of its own, though over at Coniston there is no record of a church until one was built in 1586. In 1219 Hawkshead got the right to bury its dead in its own churchyard, before which they had to carry them all the long hilly way to the mother church of Dalton in Low Furness, but Coniston until 1586 had to continue to take its dead, wrapped in a winding-sheet and fastened on a horse's back, to Ulverston for burial. It is evident that the length of the funeral journey was at the Lakes some indication of the ecclesiastical importance of a place: Grasmere dead were buried at Grasmere when the dead of Ambleside (above Stock) had to be taken five hilly miles to be buried there too; Keswick funerals marched but half a mile out to Crosthwaite churchyard, while the Borrowdale dead had to be carried there from the furthest corners of that remote dale; the dead of Wasdale Head were taken by a rough track six miles down the lake to Strands; from Mardale the long journey over the fells to Shap had to be faced whenever a dalesman was gathered to his fathers. These long, sad journeys followed recognized "corpse roads" which were adhered to with the utmost scrupulousness. No smallest deviation was allowed, and of the many stories of adventures on these wild mountain ways in winter perhaps the most gruesome relates the escape of a horse, the corpse strapped to its back, during the passage of the fells between Mardale and Shap, and its subsequent wanderings over these rough and lonely uplands for some weeks before it was recaptured.

Thus Hawkshead with a churchyard of its own ranked above Coniston in the early Middle Ages, though the fact that it was owned by the Abbey of Furness gave it an advantage in ecclesiastical matters. Not to its

woods, but to good pasture and ploughland did Hawkshead owe this, its early importance, for its woodland industries, such as lath-splitting and, in later days, its bobbin-mill were of but little consequence in the life of the town. Beyond the Hawkshead moors the manor of Coniston belonged to the family of le Fleming, who were settled by the middle of the thirteenth century in a predecessor of the present Coniston Old Hall, at what came later to be known as Church Coniston. They had many customary tenants farming their lower lands, a wooded park well stocked with fallow-deer, char from Coniston Water, and "In ye woods here many Martons are often catched". But the district could not have been so fertile as the country immediately about Hawkshead. Here the monks stored in their grange at Hawkshead Hall, about a mile north of the little town, great quantities of wool and much corn grown in the open fertile lands at the head of Esthwaite Water. The corn-mill at Hawkshead was of a value unusual in the Furness Fells. And later Hawkshead got a weekly market of its own from James I, a privilege which, as already noted, Grasmere had failed to obtain. By now its famous Grammar School was well established and its wool market was noted, yarn from here being sent as far, certainly, as Kendal. Then, far away from Hawkshead, someone invented textile machinery, and so Hawkshead market failed and died.

The town of Hawkshead is there yet: the courthouse of the monks at Hawkshead Hall: the little house where the boy Wordsworth lodged: the Grammar School where he learnt perhaps the least important of the lessons that the vale of Esthwaite taught him: the huddle of white-

washed cottages and narrow lanes, one cart wide, "where the houses seem as if they had been dancing a country-dance, but being all out, they stood still where the dance ended!". All these are there yet, blown about with a faint mist of blue wood-smoke, with rain shining on the slate roofs in the windy October sunshine, and a good scent of the baking of wiggs and Hawkshead cakes lingering in those queer alleyways that seem to lead straight into someone's back door, but really wriggle round a house corner and through an arch and a back-yard or two, and so out again to some mediæval ditch of a street. Hawkshead town is there yet, praise be, but the spirit of its brief prosperity has gone from it. In 1568 there were 51 baptisms in Hawkshead; in 1833 there were 50; now the average is only about 16. No longer concerned with trade or manufacture, it acts but as a shopping centre for a thinly-peopled country-side and by reason of its charm, its memories of Wordsworth, and its wiggs, draws to it the discriminating tourist.

At Coniston there is yet, however, something of that commerce which enabled it at last to equal and then surpass Hawkshead in importance. There is copper and some iron ore in Coniston Fells, and mines have been worked in the flanks of the Old Man from an unknown period. Coniston folk carried wood and charcoal and copper ore to Keswick in the days of Elizabeth and the Company of Mines Royal; they worked in the mines; smelted iron ore with the charcoal they burned in their woods; boated goods like salt, and ore, and corn, and wood, on the easy highway of the lake, and engaged generally in mining and trade activities. In 1819, by which time Hawkshead had already endured some

twenty years or so of stagnation, eighty additional free seats were provided in the recently rebuilt church at Coniston, while its inhabitants so multiplied that from 338 villagers in 1801 there came to be in 1861 over thirteen hundred. It was the mines that brought the railway to Coniston in 1859, but they gradually failed from this time onwards till they were closed in 1905, though since then various new attempts at working them have been made. Quarrying had, however, become important long before this. Local flags and slates were first worked in earnest in the eighteenth century in Monk Coniston fells, Tilberthwaite, the Old Man, and Walna Scar, and the slate was taken down the lake in sailing-boats and sent far afield. The quarries are still in being, and since it is only in a few places that they mar the wild loveliness of Coniston, tourists are plentiful. Moreover, as a rail-head, Coniston has an importance of its own, so that altogether its population is now much larger than that of the once far more important Hawkshead.

Of the many little settlements that grew up in the woods and wastes of Coniston and High Furness, only Hawkshead and Coniston itself became of any size and they, as noted above, not because of their woodlands. For forests do not breed towns. Workers in wood must go out into the woods and, more or less on the spot, transform the bulky, cumbersome mass of their raw material into whatever they wish to sell. And if modern man found himself suddenly powerless to interfere with the trees, the forests of High Furness and Coniston would, slowly but quite certainly, close in upon Hawkshead and Coniston towns, these alien growths, and smother them.

CHAPTER X

AN UNKNOWN WORLD: ULLSWATER AND PATTERDALE

Among all the visions of this enchanting country, we had seen nothing so beautifully sublime, so correctly picturesque, as this.—WILLIAM GILPIN, 1772

IN these days too many of those who adventure to the Lake Country do so in the familiar atmosphere of their own closed cars, and look at the scenery through a kind of haze of home comforts that moves with the traveller as his air bubble accompanies the water-beetle. So regarded, the Lake Country seems a well managed playground. Should, by any mischance of wild weather or inequality of the ground, harm befall one of "those elegant strangers, whose habits of life have rendered the more abrupt pedestrian rambles, in many instances, impracticable" (as Green remarked, though not of motorists, in 1819), he feels aggrievedly that someone must be at fault in a place that so lays itself out for the enticement of such as he. So it is not altogether surprising that those who come to Patterdale are seldom conscious of mystery. Yet mystery there is here, indeed several mysteries.

William Gilpin, in the description of Ullswater quoted at the head of this chapter, solved, satisfactorily no

doubt to himself, one of its mysteries. Others find the scenery strangely difficult to describe. Even Mrs. Radcliffe, whose account of the Lakes in 1795 contains vivid and beautiful descriptions of the gloom and brightness of autumn among the fells, even she admits herself incapable of picturing the head of Ullswater. There is, indeed, something about the great hills, the wild and wooded glens, the green ditch of Patterdale and the changing brightness of its waters, that involves the mind in a kind of bemused beatitude. This is one of the mysteries of the Ullswater country-side, and one not without its advantages. There are others: there are the fells and the lakes, the fells that enclose the dale, Ullswater and Brotherswater that bring into it the strangeness of waters shining above a world hidden from even the most expert of anglers. Certainly there are fells and lakes everywhere (almost) in the Lake Country, but there is a seclusion about Patterdale, a something strange in the windy sounds and moving lights on its lakes, and in that faint purple haze that lies over Ullswater in an August noon, that endues with mystery both fells and waters.

It is owing to the fells, that have shed human settlers down into the dales even as they shed the rainwater, that the habitations of Patterdale form an island of population in a wilderness. So do the fells at once preserve their own remoteness and ensure to Patterdale something of that mysterious individuality that sets the trout of one mountain beck apart from his brethren on the other side of the watershed.

This may not have been so in the old days when prehistoric man raised the ramparts and tumuli, the

ULLSWATER AND PLACE FELL

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cairns and stone circles, that are scattered about, some or all of them, on Soulby Fell and Great Mell Fell and Dunmallet and Moor Divock, for then the valley must have been swamp and forest and the fells, with all their rigours of mountain weather, somewhat more tolerable as a retreat for man. The Romans laid their road along the ridge of High Street. But since long before the Conquest it has been the dale that has sheltered those few inhabitants who have won a living from the wild country-side, and the fells have long lapsed back into the loneliness that was theirs before man came. There was a monastery at Dacre, some three miles beyond the foot of the lake, by the eighth century. Some time before the Conquest the Norsemen came, and their pioneering industry can be traced here as elsewhere by existing place-names, denoting to the learned their farms and the booths of their retainers, their summer sheilings, and the forests where their pigs roamed. These names, the Viking blood that ran in the old dalesfolks' veins, and the traditional habit of building those outside stone staircases that still give such charm to some of the old houses at Low Hartsop, the Norse left behind them like a faint echo of the past held between the fells. They themselves gradually merged into the farmer folk, mixed in origin, but strongly individual, of mediæval Patterdale, such a community as was described by a writer in 1791 as having formerly existed in Westmorland, where there were, he declares, "whole vallies of Danes, all relations, and known, when they could get out of their native hollows, by their red heads, and their language being like the baa-ing of sheep."

Whether Danes or Norsemen, red-headed or not, the

people of Patterdale certainly found it none too easy to get out of their native hollow. So shut in by fells, so isolated were they that, like the even more remote Mardale on the other side of the High Street range, they had a "king" of their own, here of the line of the Mounseys of Patterdale Hall. By 1793 their ancient homestead of a palace, which stood on the side of a cliff near the site of the present Patterdale Hall, was fallen into disrepair. The cliff was damp and green with moss; the house shut in behind by walls of rock, "weeping with springs"; a curious curtain wall blocked out light and air, while the neglected roof was grown with fern. In 1824 the last king of Patterdale sold his ancestral domain, and the old house was demolished. Peat tracks and horse tracks alone led to the dale over the Helvellyn and High Street ranges from west and east, tracks very dangerous in bad weather and at night. Even in these days and to such stalwarts as the huntsmen of the Ullswater foxhounds fell routes, like that of the Sticks Pass from St. John's Vale over to Glenridding, are difficult to follow after dark. Over the Kirkstone Pass from Windermere and the south came but bridle tracks, one each side of the stream, and that the pass was rather an obstacle than an easy link with the outside world is shown by the old Patterdale reference to travellers by it as having come "ower t' top".

Here on Kirkstone the road rises to fifteen hundred feet, and mountain weather, combined with the gradients, still makes the pass even in these days of its excellent road surface a potential adventure for those who risk "the horror and tedium occasioned by this frightful Glen". Floods cut up the road and occasionally strew

it with boulders; snow, ice-covered hills, and that impenetrable blackness known as a "Kirkstone black fog", all at times combine against motorists here, and even in summer sunshine the long, steep tilt of the road down to the little blue square of Brotherswater far below takes unawares top-gear drivers nearly every season and lands them (those that are lucky) in Penrith hospital. Yet the top of Kirkstone in November when a driving snowstorm lifts enough to show the sea, a plain shining very far off, and darkened here and there by trailing storms, can be of so solemn a beauty that even a motorist wrestling with his non-skid chains must pause to stare.

From Patterdale there was a way, now a good road, over the Matterdale moors to Troutbeck and on to Keswick, but the only easy outlet from the dale was that down to Pooley Bridge and Penrith, and in the days when all routes were bad the dalesfolk as commonly followed that by Boardale Hause and Howtown on the east side of Ullswater as the flatter but longer way along the west bank.

So isolated, sunk like a little green oasis in the untameable fells, the hollow of Patterdale had perforce to yield all things necessary to those farming folk who, sprung from "fore-elders" that had come here before history began in the dale, lived to win sustenance from its wet bottom-lands and stony slopes. Here, besides the usual resources of the Lake Country dales, there were cornfields that stretched down to the lake shores, and whose harvest of oats was ground into fine oatmeal at a famous old mill at Hartsop. Sledges loaded with corn used the frozen lake as a highway in the great frost

of 1607–8. In the thirteenth century the fells of Martindale and about the head of the lake were one of the Norman deer forests, but there were farms and a mill in Patterdale, and the valley supported several little halls and manor houses. There was the Tudor house of Hartsop Hall that in 1671 was described as "anciently" belonging to the Lancasters of Sockbridge; Deepdale Hall, whose master, Adam de Deepdale, was in 1197 High Sheriff of Westmorland; the little manor of Glencoin that had but three customary tenants besides its wood and fishery; the manor of Martindale that was granted by Elizabeth to the Earl of Sussex, and the tenants of whose little holdings had strictly to respect the lord's red deer; and that vanished square stone building, rather pele tower no doubt than house, that stood within the ramparts of an earlier age on Dunmallet Hill above Pooley Bridge.

Before any recorded mention of a church at Patterdale the Scots in the fourteenth century destroyed a building known as Old Church that stood, where is now Old Church farm, beside Ullswater, about half-way between Pooley Bridge and Aira Force. This would seem to show that Patterdale was then known as a through route to the south, unless the Scots were merely making a hasty and rather profitless raid into the dale. The "Brettestreete", as the Roman road along the top of the High Street range was known in the Middle Ages, was no doubt by now neglected for the less rigorous way by the dale. Foundations remaining on Boardale Hause where the pony track from Patterdale climbs over towards Howtown have been supposed to be those of a thirteenth-century church,

almost incredibly small though it must have been. When this was a popular route to Penrith a church here would have served both Patterdale and those various dales, now even more remote than they were, that are collectively called Martindale.

There was in Patterdale stone worth quarrying and much mineral wealth. The quarrymen's village of Low Hartsop was once bigger than that of Patterdale, and lively "merry nights" were held at the old inn that is now called the Brotherswater Hotel. Lead and zinc ores have been worked intermittently since early days on the flanks of Helvellyn and Fairfield, and the Greenside Mines, up Grisedale, were opened in the eighteenth century. The ore was carried on pack-horses to Keswick or Alston or the vale of Newlands to be smelted, while the slate from Hartsop, after being taken on sleds down to Kirkstone Foot, was sent by horse to the head of the lake, and then boated down to Pooley Bridge. The Greenside Mines were able to bear the cost of the difficult transport of their ores to the outside world. They have now been continuously worked for more than a hundred years, and the ore is taken by motor-lorry over the nine miles or so of road to Troutbeck railway station. But the Hartsop quarries found themselves too heavily handicapped by their remoteness. Even nowadays the fells assert themselves against mineral transport, and recently the motor-tractor going up the narrow hill track to the Greenside Mines, against a stormy wind eddying down from Helvellyn, was overturned and the driver killed.

Except in very bad weather Patterdale now is accessible enough. Yet it remains an islet of population, a

green ditch hollowed out of that alien world of mountains where plants and beasts and weather all behave as if they belonged, as indeed they do, to a world apart from that of men. And besides the fells Patterdale has lakes, little Brotherswater, and those long and shining reaches of Ullswater that stretch into the very heart of the big hills. All lakes are strange to man. Short-lived things, destined to be filled or drained dry, they themselves pass through a kind of life-cycle in which the familiar changes of land suffer a watery transformation. Meanwhile, within the changing lake is a whole world of living things that are changing also. As the lake shallows above its thickening deposits of fine mud, and as vegetation creeps outward from the shores and there come about changes in the amount of oxygen in its diminished depths, so do the plants and creatures who live within it alter. Such gradual dwindlings and disappearances of some species and development of others are processes as slow as the inevitable contraction of the lake, yet within recent times there have been changes in the Ullswater depths of a kind that make it easier for man to realize that there is here a very unstable little world, mysteriously at war within itself, subject to comforts and distresses at which we can make no guess.

There used to be char in Ullswater, and the char in himself is a mysterious fish. The learned say that he is a survival from the Ice Age, that deep within his finny bosom is the inherited love of a coolness only to be found, in summer, in the depths of our deeper lakes; his life-history, what he eats, the fickle movements of his drifting shoals about the lakes, the habits of his lady at spawning time, all these are but imperfectly

understood by those who would fain prey upon him. Moreover, the char in Ullswater has added to his mysterious qualities that of disappearance, for, unless a few morose survivors remain permanently hidden in the depths, the char is gone from what should, apart from the polluted waters from the Greenside Mines, be for him a very happy home. In Ullswater there used also to be great grey trout, the Great Lake Trout of fishermen, weighing, it was said, thirty pounds and more. There were such shoals of skellies or gwyniards, a kind of freshwater herring, reputed never to take a fly, that they were netted in cartloads and spread on the fields for manure. Until the last year or two there were vast shoals of perch off Howton and Kail Pot, and perch weighing six pounds were caught at one time, according to an eighteenth-century writer. Yet now the huge cannibal trout never appear. The skellies are so rare that if a dead one is washed up on the Ullswater shores or an angler, surprisingly, takes one on the fly, the event is chronicled in all the local newspapers. A lady perch may conceal within her more than one hundred and fifty thousand eggs of potential little perches, yet in Ullswater perch have suffered some great disaster. In-breeding, disease, overcrowding, or some more mysterious affliction has overtaken them, and now a good catch of perch is rare. Certainly there are still eels in the lake, as long as one's arm, as there were in the days when eighteenth-century writers described them as migrating from the lake in writhing companies beneath Pooley Bridge in autumn. But then eels, like char, are mysterious enough in themselves without any such change in their fortunes as has afflicted their watery

companions in the lake. It is said that there are eels in Codale Tarn, and if they can get up there, and from there set forth on their migrations in due season, wriggling down a fell torrent to Easedale Tarn, down the great fall of Sour Milk Gill, down the Rothay and through Grasmere and Windermere lakes, and at last down the broad Leven to salt water at Greenodd, it would seem that few waters can be secure from wandering eels. And to all these other fishy mysteries of Ullswater was added in the great frost of early 1929 that of the salmon found frozen into the ice floes of the Deepdale Beck. Salmon now seldom enter Ullswater, and this one must have made his lonely way through the great lake and up the icy beck until the waters closed about him, hard as iron, and so he died, and gulls came and ate his frozen head where it stuck forth from the ice.

All these living things, fish and eels and water-beetles, otters, a fox hunted to his death over a Place Fell crag, a homing Herdwick ewe swimming across to gain her native fell, thousands upon thousands of sea-gulls who at dusk settle upon its waters in spring, Ullswater accepts them all; hides and shelters them; presides dispassionately over their loves and hates and their last fighting agony of death. And its clear waters influence the life of more than its own denizens, for all Patterdale is to some extent submitted to the tyranny of its great lake. Its waters, relatively warm in autumn and cool in spring, breathe unseasonable airs upon its shores, for the lake is a deep one, and the warmth of summer, slowly absorbed in the spring, is as slowly dissipated out into the chill air of coming winter. The mountain becks rushing down to it grow warm and cold again

almost with every burst of sunshine and its following cloud-shadows: the day and night temperatures of a beck entering Windermere, used for a time as a trout hatchery, were found to vary as much as 14° F. But all these tempestuous and changeful little waters grow quiet in Ullswater. Their sunlit warmth and the chill of their frozen crags pass out into the great lake, and when at last the mountain waters flow, clear and slow, beneath Pooley Bridge, they have in their long pause within its hollow grown irresponsive and slow-changing as Ullswater itself, so that the River Eamont flows a cold stream through the spring meadows below the lake and a warm one, marked by a line of autumn mists, when their grasses are hoary with the first frosts.

More important to Patterdale man than the warm and chilly breathings of the lake is the level of its waters. The flats that extend up to Brotherswater and beyond it, and the scanty patches of meadow land that lie here and there along its shores, depend for their welfare on how the lake behaves at its outlet at Pooley Bridge. Recently it was found that land from Kirkstone Foot to Ullswater which was formerly mown for hay was becoming water-logged, and no longer fit even for grazing. There have always been floods here. Indeed, Wordsworth, who thought of building himself a little home beneath Place Fell, is reputed to have been frightened away by a Patterdale flood that reduced his chosen site to a rocky islet. But the persistent deterioration of the dale bottom was more serious.

Meadow land is scarce in Patterdale, and a report on the matter was submitted to the Westmorland County Council. The trouble was found to be due partly to the

partial choking with gravel and scrub of the Goldrill Beck and of its outlet into Ullswater, but the fundamental cause was said to be the obstruction, by islets and an old weir, of the free flow of the River Eamont where it leaves the great lake. So hindered in their outflow the waters of Ullswater tend to back up the valley, to check the flow of the Goldrill Beck, to raise the water-level in all the low-lying lands about the lake, and so hinder their drainage.

Similar trouble is experienced at Grasmere when a mountain beck from Loughrigg washes, as it does periodically, such a mass of stones down into the Rothay just where it leaves the lake as materially to obstruct its flow. Then Grasmere rises in level, perhaps insensibly to the casual observer, but sufficiently to check the free drainage of a wide area of the valley bottom. The dalesfolk in the Lake Country are quite familiar with this aspect of lake outlets, and more than a century ago they widened and cleared the outlets of Thirlmere and of Bassenthwaite Lake in an effort to free the flats at the head of these lakes from superfluous water, and the outlet of Elterwater was similarly enlarged to lessen the flooding of its lakeside meadows. As will be noted later, it is when the Derwent just below its exit from Derwentwater is checked in its flow that such wide areas of the Borrowdale flats, at the head of the lake, are submerged. Even when no unusual obstruction exists at the outlet it often happens in flood times that more water is poured into a lake than its outfall river can carry away equally quickly. Occasionally the fifty odd square miles that drain down into Ullswater shed so much water into it that its level, big lake though it is,

rises as much as six or seven feet in a day. Windermere lake, bigger still, may rise five feet during a flood, and this in spite of the fact that the Leven at its exit from the lake may be so swollen as to reach the front door of the Swan Hotel at Newby Bridge. Derwentwater in highest flood rises over nine feet above its dry-weather level, and Coniston Water about six feet.

So even in these days man is not freed from the dominance of the waters at the Lakes. With the decline of agriculture and a changed system of local administration, land like that at Patterdale is allowed to lapse back into something of that swampiness which drove our Stone Age ancestors up to the heights. Without ceaseless care and effort the dale bottoms become slowly increasingly water-logged, the lakeside meadows more and more marshy and reed-grown. In the old days the farmers themselves, with implements like two-pronged rakes, besides clearing the lake outlets periodically, dragged stones from the stream beds and piled them on the banks. It is said locally that the new road in Great Langdale need never have been built if the beck had been cleaned out as of old and its stones used to repair the old road. Now the dalesfolk no longer keep clear their waterways or their lake outlets and, as the Westmorland County Council found at Patterdale, it is not easy to determine who shall bear the cost of putting things right again.

Thus although Patterdale now forms in summer a corridor for a succession of charabancs, though off-comes have built many houses there like the new colony that stands, in an exposed position that would have filled the old farm builders with horror, above Low Hartsop,

yet the dalesfolk are still subject to the control of those natural conditions whose dominance is hidden from the casual visitor. The fells still dictate the few lines of approach to Patterdale and, as much as ever, decide the type of farming in the dale, so that the first prizes at Patterdale whist-drives are, very often, sheep. The gift of a live Herdwick sheep would embarrass some whist players, but not those in Patterdale, surrounded as they are by almost unlimited areas of fell grazings. The lakes and the mountain becks between them still flood the meadows, and slowly soak them into an increasing soddenness. Floods yet wash away bridges and carry sheep out into Ullswater. The Penrith road, when great waves break right across it, is impassable even to motor-buses. Just as much as long ago, heavy snows baffle all movement in the dale, so that the district nurse (as happened one winter night recently) may have to fight her way through drifts to the lake shore, row herself across the dark water, struggle, again on foot, through the snowy night to a remote cottage on the eastern side of the lake, and there attend the birth of a potential dalesman. The pale mist that hangs over Ullswater when its waters on some frosty autumn morning are twenty degrees warmer than its enclosing slopes is like an incarnation of those mysterious qualities that belong to its remote depths; the sunshine that lies, on a December afternoon, vivid as liquid gold, on Gowbarrow Fell, above those shadowed depths of Glencoin that never see the mid-winter sun, is symbolic of that world apart of the higher fells that surrounds Ullswater.

CHAPTER XI

RAINFALL AT THE LAKES

When the sky is clear . . . a black cloud will start up instantly from behind a Mountain, and if you are not very near a house, ten to one you are wet before you can run a hundred yards.—A. WALKER, 1791

IT may, perhaps, be well to collect together in one chapter some observations on the rainfall of the Lake Country. Rain at the Lakes is apt to form the kind of accompaniment to daily life that the quiet sound of a river supplies, to be equally so interwoven with all the business of life that it comes to be received without comment by the dalesfolk. Tourists give vent to fretful outcries against rain, but the inhabitants carry, men and women alike, large umbrellas; observe a distinction between Sunday clothes and wet-Sunday clothes, and go unperturbed about their business in weather that would make an off-come stay indoors. Farm-labourers, wallers building houses, roadmen, all continue placidly at their work, adding a sack or two over their shoulders as the wet day passes by, in downpours that would drive men of the Midlands and South under cover in half an hour.

Holiday-makers are almost invariably convinced that the Lake Country is wet. So it is. But it is not as wet as

their morbid preoccupation with the weather leads them to conclude. It is no wetter than some other well-known holiday districts. The rain does not spread evenly, as people who know nothing of the Lakes sometimes airily assume, in a gloom of cloud and falling water over the whole district. There are, even in rainy weather, rents in the pall; sunny valleys relatively dry, like those of Windermere and Esthwaite Water; fells somewhat sheltered, as those of eastern Ullswater, from the wet west winds; open basins, like the vale of Keswick, about which the mountain rains circle in dark and harmless trailings. Indeed, it is only in some few little areas, capriciously, it seems, disposed about the country-side, that the Lake rain really exerts its undoubted powers. The district too suffers, really suffers, from droughts that, particularly in spring, drive inhabitants of even the vale of Borrowdale to sore straits for their water supply and induce people who live in fell-side villas to let their houses to unsuspecting off-comes and go away until such time as their own particular mountain stream flows again. Certainly the average yearly rainfall at that one of the nine rain-gauges above Borrowdale which is known as the Stye amounts to 176·9 inches, but then there are similar records in parts of Snowdonia and on Ben Nevis. And though a comparison between the awesome totals at the Stye with the annual rainfall of 19·3 inches at the mouth of the Thames may well scare away prospective visitors, yet Keswick has only 57 inches and the green vale of Lorton below Crummock Water but 54 in the year, while such crowded holiday resorts as Cornwall and central and northern Wales enjoy, or endure, in many places, similar moderate rainfalls

To the holiday-maker the number of wet days has alone any significance. To him a downpour and a drizzle are almost equally detestable. Now the central part of the Lake Country has, on the average, 225 rain days a year, a rain day being one on which those who keep a rain-gauge may observe within it an addition of at least 0·01 inch during the twenty-four hours in question. In south-east England they have only some 115 rain days and on the South Coast about 175. Certainly Ben Nevis has 259 rain days in the year, but nevertheless these figures, it must be admitted, are not good for that weather reputation of which the inhabitants of the Lake District are even fiercely jealous. Moreover, on these rain days more rain falls at the Lakes than during the rain days of less rigorous regions: at Dungeon Gill in Great Langdale 84 per cent of the rain days are also classed as wet days, whereas in the Midlands the proportion is only some 65 per cent. If all sorts of averages are taken it is found that over 6/10ths of an inch of rain falls on an average rain day at the Lakes, while in East Anglia they have but little more than one-tenth.

It is therefore clear enough, if statistics only are considered, that the Lake Country is, what only an outsider would dare to admit, wet. But rain here cannot fairly be regarded from the statistical point of view alone. At the Lakes the rain and the country-side make up a whole. The scenery would be incomplete, the manifold activities of Lake Country man meaningless, without rain, and the Lake Country rain is as much a product of the fell country, as essentially a part of it, as is the bracken on the hill slopes. Whether falling upon

Easedale in pale ropes, curiously twisted and intermingled by some freak of mountain breezes, or advancing, an opaque wall, above a line of breaking waves, white and ominous of squalls, across Derwentwater, rain here seems often enough more real than fells and lakes themselves. Moreover, rain at the Lakes is more like a living thing than a mere result of mechanical response to physical changes. From outside the district the mountain weather may be seen to brood, a tangible presence, above the Lake hills. From the sunny lower lands about Gosforth or Cockermouth the heavy clouds collected over Wasdale and Buttermere so involve both distant mountains and valleys that cloud, cloud-shadow, and the dark hill-sides merge one into the other in a mysterious gloom. When the open country about Carlisle is wind-swept and sunny, great cumulus clouds piled above the Lake Country shine in the southern sky, sunlit but resting on the mingled shadows of the mountains and themselves: from the moors beyond Kendal and the yellow sands of the Lancashire coast the clouds over the Lake hills are seen to rise in as isolated and distinct a cloud island as the distant fells form, in clear weather, a mountain group remote from the lower lands near-by.

Lake Country rain is, besides, in itself a visible thing. With the fells behind it it may be watched passing on its way; marching across the slopes of Skiddaw with something of the hesitancy of indecision; advancing down Borrowdale, a white blur, with the speed of the wind; gathering in pale veils above the dark hollow of Wastwater and then fading away again before a drop falls into the still water below. And often it appears

independent of all the ordinary rules of weather: with a steadily falling barometer each day may be finer than the last: on a perfectly windless afternoon and in the middle of an anticyclone the motorist may be chased from Coniston to Grasmere by an ominous cloudbank that, rising over the Torver Moors, spreads behind and above him as he drives, and scatters the first rain of a downpour in resounding drops on his hood as he draws up in Grasmere. Visible, the Lake rain is also vocal. Times of drought are times of silence among the fells. Only when rain falls again does the country-side become murmurous with running water, so that on the broad ridges of the higher fells alone may quietness be found, where, above the clamorous waters of the lower slopes, they rise into a silence that seems to rest upon them from above. Only with rain does each gill and force send out the cry of its falling waters until in the dales the sound of streams and spaces of silence are as intermingled as sunshine and shadow. For the fells cast sound-shadows, so that Lodore may be clearly heard from Friar's Crag far down the lake and yet be inaudible round the shoulder of one of its own fells; the mountain voices of Tongue Gill and Sour Milk Gill at Grasmere mingle faint but clear on Helm Crag, while the roar of the great Easedale fall is cut off when the wanderer has climbed but a few hundred yards over the fell above it.

In spite, however, of its uncanny and whimsical materializations, rain in the Lake Country is conditioned by two factors; by the western position of the district and by its mountains. To its nearness to the west coast it owes those spring droughts in which wet August tourists refuse to believe, and it shares

with other western regions a mid-winter maximum of rainfall. Seathwaite, at the wet head of Borrowdale, has a marked dry period in April, May, and June, and a pronounced maximum in December and January, and right on the outskirts of the district Kendal shares also in a winter downpour and a decrease in the spring rainfall. Beyond this both these places experience, with the whole of the region, that secondary maximum of rainfall in August that was noted in the first chapter. This is felt in many parts of the country, and in the case of the Lakes is apt to give tourists an exaggerated idea of the wetness of the district. Its heavy winter rain and dry spring period the Lake Country owes in the main to those great movements in the atmosphere which determine the weather of all the western Atlantic sea-board.

But it is to its own mountains that are due those local peculiarities of rainfall which charm or embitter the observer according to his temperament and occupation. Everyone knows that mountains summon rain from the air, weave from a clear sea-wind cloud and the gloom of mists, call down not only upon their own heads but on their valleys streaming deluges of water that had just previously passed over the coast-lands as a sunlit, invisible vapour. It is to its mountains that the Lake Country chiefly owes its heavy rain. Thus Barrow, Ravenglass, Whitehaven and other sea-board places, although the first to receive the wet wind from the sea, have an average of only some 40 inches a year, while inland but outside the hills Carlisle and Penrith have but 32.

In the Alps rain and snow increase in amount up to a height that varies greatly according to the locality,

but which approximates very broadly to 6,000 feet. Above this level it becomes drier with increasing height. Moreover, about half the total quantity of water vapour in the atmosphere is contained in the air beneath 6,500 feet. Thus, though the Lake mountains rise above a considerable proportion of the water vapour in the air they nowhere approach the level of maximum rainfall, and still less does any part of them rise above this level into those relatively arid conditions which give to the higher Alpine plants an almost desert character. Thus, though there are exceptions to this general rule, in the Lake Country rain and snowfall increase all the way to the tops. A tourist seeking rain (if ever there were such) can walk up into feet and yards of it—from Keswick up into the streaming clouds on Skiddaw, from Seathwaite with its 129 inches up to the Stye with its additional four feet or so; from Grasmere and its 83 inches to the 95 inches that soak Fairfield in a year, from Ambleside with 76 up on to Kirkstone Pass with 98 inches.

And, beyond this, the wanderer may as easily in some places walk along into rain as up into it. Often enough the wide basin of Keswick is full of sunlight when the head of Borrowdale is to be seen sunk in a darkness of cloud, while from the lower lands about the end of Coniston Water storms passing in a remote and shadowy gloom athwart the mountain hollow at the head of the lake seem to belong to a world apart from the untroubled lands of the Crake valley. This comes from the fact that narrow valleys, particularly when they lie across the path of the prevalent winds, are often as wet as, or wetter than, their surrounding heights.

It is no simple process by which the Lake mountains,

thrusting their bulk up into the wet and hurrying air currents from the Atlantic, breed rain. The formation of cloud, the condensation of its vapours, are processes minutely adjusted to the slope and aspect and altitude of the fells, to their position relative to other heights, to the degree of their intersection by valleys and the direction of these compared with that of the rainy winds.

The wind of course is deeply concerned in the game of rain making, and here among the mountains the wind currents are as troubled as are the eddying waters of a river that flows over an irregular bed. As on a sunny day the fells are chequered with the shadows of their own slopes and ridges and crags, so in wind are they marked by spaces of wind-shadow, by areas of comparative calm, and in times of rain by breadths of relative dryness inexplicable except by the interference of their mountain masses with the flow of wet Atlantic air. Baffled among the fells and deflected in their courses, the winds bring rain from unexpected quarters, and to a stranger a northerly rain streaming from a dense gloom over Grasmere seems the more unusual since he does not realize that the wind is but an eddy in a wet westerly air that has lost its way among the hills. And they may likewise withhold rain when those unused to the fells confidently expect it. Climbers on Helvellyn on some October day when a warm south-west wind is driving, full of cloud and rain, over the district, may watch with a feeling of strange security showers trailing blue-black over the western hills beyond Thirlmere, showers that fade away before they reach Helvellyn. For Helvellyn and its still more eastern neighbour High Street lie in what meteorologists

call the rain-shadow of the more western Lake District mountains, as Appleby and the Eden valley, with little over thirty inches a year, lie in the rain-shadow of the Lake Country as a whole.

Infinite minor complications in the rainfall are thus induced by the obtrusion of the Lake Country fells into the lower layers of the atmosphere, but they are powerless to influence those seasonal changes in the air currents of the North Atlantic which govern our weather. The Lake mountains increase the winter maximum of rainfall, but they do not create it. It is begotten out where the southern sunshine and the ocean winds move together, in harmony with the moving earth, and so generate between them those stronger, wetter, and more southerly winds from the south-west that in winter blow over Lakeland. In this season the mountains wring water from the saturated air and it is now that there is the greatest contrast here between the rainfall of mountain and of plain. In summer, rain induced by the fells is at its least: Atlantic winds are weakened at this season and it is then that the rainfall of the Lake mountains and that of the lowlands that surround them most nearly approximate.

Of rains of phenomenal intensity there are many records at the Lakes, and more marks left upon the country-side, plain for those who have eyes to see them. For it must be remembered that changes, profound and lasting, may be wrought in a few hours of storm that it would take many years of ordinary weather to bring about, changes, moreover, that only immense forces, suddenly brought into play, could cause. Two exceptional downfalls of rain, of water rather, for the clouds

seem to have emptied themselves upon the earth in sheets, are referred to in almost all of the old guide-books on the Lake Country. On September 9, 1760, a "memorable water-spout" descended upon Grasmoor. From the slopes of the mountain a new-born river rushed down towards Crummock Lake, a stream described as five or six yards deep and nearly a hundred yards across. With it it bore immense masses of rock, earth, and rubble torn from the mountain, which were spread out fanwise on the lowest slopes above Lanthwaite Green in a "dry delta", still obvious enough even to the motorist, though it is now overgrown with grass and bracken. Again, on August 22, 1749, the inhabitants of St. John's Vale heard, after a hot day, a frightful noise in the evening air above the vale, a sound like that of a strong wind in tall tree-tops, though there was a calm at the time. Then came thunder and lightning and with it or after it a "spout of water" that broke on the Legbert fells to the east of the vale. Thereafter descriptions of the "horrid havock" wrought in the dale differ, but it is clear that it was submerged under some feet of water and that large areas of it were buried in stones, earth, and sand, while some buildings were swept away. Houses were filled with sand to the first story; "thousands of prodigious stones were piled upon each other to the height of eleven yards", and some of the rocks precipitated upon the dale were so large that ten horses could not move them; fertile meadows were irrevocably lost. One account describes the fate of a range of buildings consisting of corn-mill, house, and stable all under the one roof. The corn-mill and stable were swept away, the ends of the little house

between them were rent open, and the old miller, sleeping through it all, awoke to desolation and ruin.

As a rule the higher slopes of the fells, where the streams are born, are naturally not swept by flood torrents, though water may pour off them in sheets. But up on High Street the Roman road that runs along the ridge has been cut, north of the summit, by a ravine about eighteen feet deep which has been gouged out of it since the Romans came. The great dry delta that has come down Aaron Slack between Great Gable and Green Gable, and that holds up most of the water in Styhead Tarn, was, it is thought, probably washed down during one storm, while the flat promontory that almost cuts the pre-Manchester Haweswater in two is believed also to have been suddenly swept down into the lake during some great, forgotten storm of long ago.

Rains of record intensity occur more often in the lowlands of our country than among the mountains, but less spectacular floods are common at the Lakes. Then the fell slopes, mostly bare and treeless, discharge very rapidly into the dales rushing torrents of water. They themselves may be channelled, scooped out, and swept bare of soil, while the dales, only a few hundred feet above the level of their far outlets into the sea or into Morecambe Bay, receive in a few hours a deluge that may take days to drain away. Into the back of a hill-side house at Grasmere poured, not so very long ago, a new-born torrent from the slopes of Stone Arthur. Rushing through the house, it slammed the front door and so proceeded to fill the rooms until an invalid, helpless in bed, found himself floating within a few inches of the ceiling. Similar occurrences, without that

shutting of the front door that made this one dangerous, are fairly common in fell-side cottages and cause annoyance rather than surprise. The dales themselves are at such times more or less under water: Buttermere joins Crummock Water; Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite become one; Ullswater rises over the Penrith road and is joined to Brotherswater by the floods of the Goldrill Beck; the River Rothay rises and flows (very occasionally) into Grasmere church; Elterwater extends up to Skelwith Bridge; Great Langdale is under water; new lakes appear in Borrowdale; bridges are washed away, as was Skelwith Bridge in 1890 and Goody Bridge at Grasmere, that in 1897 was so damaged it had to be rebuilt; fell-side farmers are wakened by the crashing and grinding of boulders washed down the slopes in the streaming darkness.

So it happens that when a mountainous country like the Lake District is rained upon with more than usual vigour, those parts of it that receive local and exceptional deluges become involved in a grey whirl of waters—water descending from the sky in driving sheets, water rushing down the hill-sides, water standing in pale breadths over lands that were green an hour or two before. And with the flood-waters come stones and earth, dead sheep, tree branches, all the loose débris of fell and dale, until it seems as if the land itself were dissolving and becoming one with the tumultuous march of the waters. But for the comfort of would-be visitors let it be stated at once that though this kind of thing may just as likely occur in summer as in winter, yet it is rare, and, like most rare things, it is very beautiful, though solemn.

There are plenty of other things besides rain in the

Lake Country weather; there is wind and sunshine, snow and frost, and each of these plays its part in determining what vegetation shall cover the bareness of the fells and make the dales green, and what beasts man shall grow there.

Winds, as already noted, are baffled among the mountains. Westerly gales, pouring over the coast-lands, are checked by the Lake Country hills, forced upwards by the rising slopes, set flowing down again in gusty swirls, caught in a maze of valleys that twist them out of their course and send the sea-winds roaring from the north or the south along dales that are channels for their dim wet airs, as they are channels for the streams born of them. No persistent, steady wind passes, with its reiterated touch on vegetation, over the Lake Country. Trees in the dales stand tall and straight, for though certain winds belong to certain dales they are neither strong nor persistent enough to bend a growing tree out of its course. The north wind that raises long waves on Crummock Lake and flows with a sound of wind and water against the rocks of Hause Point; the north wind and the south wind that alone trouble the quiet of Saint John's Vale, and cover the black waters of Thirlmere with white caps; the southerly gales that seem to set the whole of Derwentwater flowing in pale, wind-swept undulations upon the little cliffs of Friar's Crag; the two winds, north and south again, that stir Windermere Lake into so dangerous a turmoil; these winds, more or less constant in direction as they are forced to be by the mountain barriers, are nevertheless neither frequent nor strong enough very definitely to affect vegetation. The dalesmen do not build their

houses end-on to the wind as houses are built on the Lancashire coast and in the wind-swept lowlands of Aberdeen, and the sycamore that so often stands beside the old farms was planted rather for shelter from the sun than, like the little woods of alder and poplar that stand to windward of every old cottage on the Lancashire mosses, to act as shelter from the gales.

That navigation of the larger lakes is influenced by storms is shown by the little harbours on Ullswater, that to avoid waves and winds that sweep along the lake open northwards at its lower end and southwards, where their great length of fetch gives force to waves from the north, at the upper end. Windermere Ferry is sometimes held up for days owing to rough water, and even on Derwentwater squalls, pouncing in vicious cat's-paws from the fells, sometimes make the lake dangerous for novices who ignore the boatmen's advice.

Even in the valleys there are occasionally destructive gales like the storm that in December 1883 uprooted one of Wordsworth's "fraternal four" yew-trees in Borrowdale, wrenched the branches from another, and strewed the ground with their wreckage. Then trees are felled in hundreds; the lakes are crossed by driving walls or strange white whirls of spray, and the wind is such that cars on Dunmail Raise or rounding, in Borrowdale, the corner of Gowder Crag towards Grange may be blown to a standstill. "Ribbon gusts" furiously descending from some side valley may pass, as if still confined between mountain walls, a few yards wide, down a dale, leaving a narrow strip of destruction behind them. But, even so, on the mountains things are very different. The fells rise into a climate whose rigours are

DERWENTWATER IN CALM

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unknown in the dales. The velocity of an unobstructed wind increases very rapidly with height above the land. It was estimated recently that the top of a chimney being built in an exposed site near Liverpool would have to resist gales of at least one hundred and fifty miles an hour. Winds of this velocity have actually been recorded on Ben Nevis, and something of the stress of storm on the higher summits may be realized from the habit of those few plants that grow on the Lakeland heights, the minute mountain willow, the moss campion, the bilberry, plants with shoots either prostrate or only a few inches high, but whose roots extend some feet into the ground.

The furious mountain winds set the higher fells apart in times of storm. They become almost impassable, shrouded in a whirling dimness, darkening the dales and sending down into their green depths the bleak sounds of wind among the crags. A few years ago two huntsmen returned in April from Mardale over High Street to Patterdale, bringing with them some hounds and three little terriers. They met, at a height of over two thousand feet, a wind of such violence that both men and hounds were blown off their feet: the hounds lay down and could with difficulty be persuaded to go forward: the terriers had to be carried under the men's coats, and in spite of this two of the three little dogs died. In 1913, huntsmen, again two of them, encountered a similar gale on the same pass, and then also two terriers died of exhaustion and exposure. On the top of Helvellyn, in a winter blizzard, climbers, finding it impossible to stand upright, have sat down and been blown along the ice slopes, steering themselves by means

of an alpenstock thrust out behind. A gale that in Borrowdale does little beyond sending the autumn leaves whirling, red and gold and yellow, into the clear waters of the Derwent, up on Honister Crag booms with the sound of great guns. Recently, for the first time for many years, one of the quarry wagons on the Honister incline was blown off its rails and swung over the tip-end down the face of the crag, still attached to its cable.

In the Lake Country dales only one wind is dreaded, and that is the local equivalent for that "helm wind" which is experienced to east of the district. In the Lake District itself this wind is disliked rather for its coldness, for the eerie sounds and aerial whirlings by which it is accompanied, than feared for its destructive powers. Like the "bise" of Geneva and the Bernese Oberland, it is an uncomfortable wind, a neuralgic, rheumatic wind, that makes people susceptible to it miserable. Occasionally it blows with hurricane force even in the Lake Country. Not many years ago an old man drowned in Thirlmere was thought to have been blown into the water during a helm wind, while from Loughrigg two currents of this tempestuous stream of air, divided by Nab Scar, may be seen, where they reunite on Rydal Lake, to lift its waters in columns of spray that seem to rise as high as the fell-tops.

The helm wind comes from the east and generally in winter. In Grasmere it is heralded by a peculiar cap of pale cloud on Seat Sandal and Fairfield. But it is born away beyond the Lake Country, where, on Cross Fell, cold North Sea airs and the mild breezes from the west combine with the slopes and spreading uplands of the mountain to form chaotic air currents, draining like

rushing waters down the hill-sides. Here in its home the helm wind, though curiously limited in its extension, may blow with such violence as to upset a horse and cart, and it has a markedly injurious effect on vegetation. The Lake District lies, however, west of its normal realm. It is seldom felt in the Ullswater valley and Thirlmere and Grasmere lie more or less on the limit of its occasional western incursions.

With wind comes, often enough, sunshine in the Lake Country dales, a hurrying sunshine that flies between the flying clouds over the country, moving with an uncanny evenness of speed down and up slopes, over crags and waterfalls and lakes. For sunshine is too often dimmed and mixed with cloud at the Lakes, and though it grows in power with increasing altitude yet the inhabited parts of the district lie too little above sea-level to experience anything of the vivid sunlight of such a mountain region as the Alps. It is difficult to determine what part has been played by sunshine in determining the site and aspect of Lake Country habitations. Fairly generally, individual farms face the sun, like, for example, the scattered houses of Kentmere. There are many sunny villages like Buttermere and Boot and Rydal, many sunless and almost uninhabited northward-facing slopes like those of Lingmoor in Great Langdale, Loughrigg, and the long northern moors of Helvellyn. But there are also ancient sites of settlements, such as Baisbrown below Lingmoor, and Stonethwaite in Borrowdale, that are shadowed from the southern sun, and in any of the cases cited other considerations than those of exposure to possible sunlight may have had first place in deciding the distribution of settlements.

CHAPTER XII

LAKE COUNTRY WEATHER

A fierce wind fra t'north 'at whissel't an' rwoar't,
An' dreav t'snow i' blinndin' cloods dancin' afwore 't,
Fra t' fells into t'valleys, doon whurlin' it went.
It fand ivvery crack, ivvery crevice an' rent,
Through t'mortarless wo's; in auld hooses, it's sed,
Fwok waken't to finnd theirsels snown up i' bed.

JOHN RICHARDSON, 1876

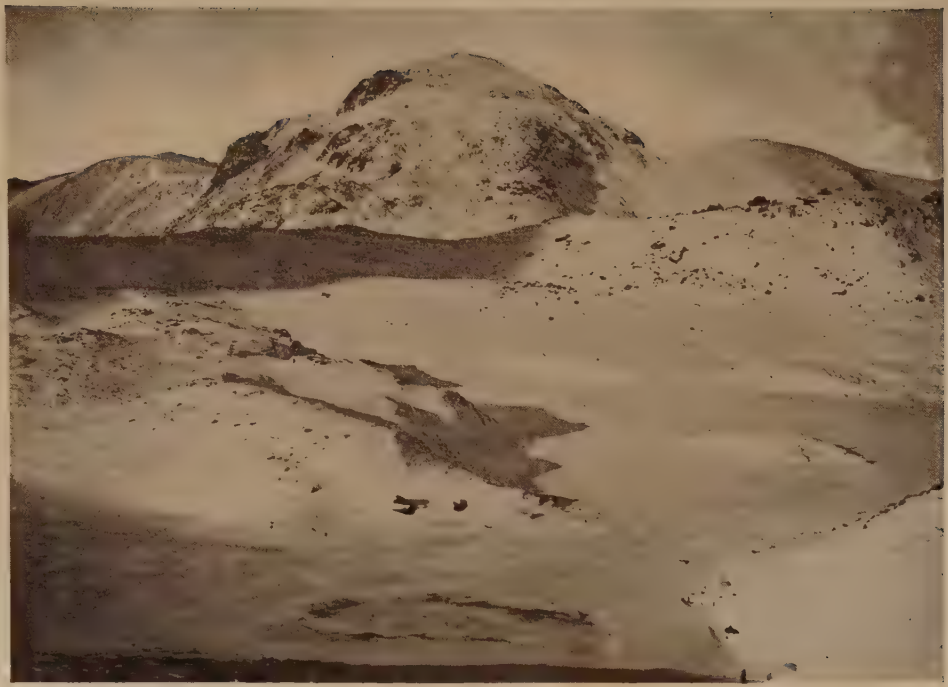
BESIDES rain and wind and sunshine there are at the Lakes frost and snow, periods of a white and dim stillness, when a vague haze of wood-smoke hangs in the dales and the little Herdwick sheep, their woolly backs white with frost, drift aimlessly about the frozen pastures. There are frosts when the mountains are sheathed in ice, their snowfields frozen, their crags sheeted with ice so clear that only its cold glimmer betrays its gathering thickness over the rocks; when the tarns are frozen into their rock basins, their watery reflections dulled and blurred; when the whole great mass of Scafell or Helvellyn or High Street seems crystallized by frost, snow and rock and streams alike, into a frozen entity that would ring like a bell if some god of winter struck it with a hammer great as a god would wield.

At times like these the dales are also frozen, though their frosts are but mild compared with the rigours of that intense cold that broods like a cloud along the higher summits. If averages ever materialized the top of Scafell might be expected commonly to be ten degrees Fahrenheit colder than Wasdale Head, or Borrowdale, or Eskdale, or any of the valleys that burrow into its great base. There are no temperature records for the Lake fells, but in periods of intense frost the tops of the higher hills must be exposed to temperatures falling far below zero, though on a sunny day there may be a superficial thaw on the heights while the valleys remain frozen. During parts at least of every winter the mountains endure arctic conditions and, rising into a white silence broken but by the wind in the crags, the hiss of snow falling on frozen ground, or the sudden irruption of hounds, chasing, far beyond the ken of the hunt, a hill fox over the summits, they form a world apart from the dales. The air at the Lakes is nearly always damp, and in times of frost this aerial dampness is transmuted into ice, so that every rock-face is glazed, and when mists drive in from the sea, spears of ice may grow out into the wind from westward-facing rocks. On the greater height of Ben Nevis such spears of frozen mist grow to some two feet in length in a day of dense fog.

But there are other frosts, local, valley frosts that occur in times of high atmospheric pressure. In still and foggy weather the temperature beside Coniston Water has been found to be a degree or so lower than that eight hundred feet above the lake. At such times to walk down from the last of the climbing sunset glow

on Stone Arthur into the vale of Grasmere is to step into a still air that closes about the wanderer like icy water. Beneath the evening sunlight on Grange Fell the great ditch of Borrowdale lies already dim with the shadows of a night frost that will not mount to these fell slopes. In such clear and settled weather the ground radiates out into the evening air the heat of the day's sunshine, and these enclosed valleys are surrounded at nightfall by rapidly cooling fell slopes and receive, besides, the air from the upper fells that drains, cold and heavy, down into them. Among bigger hills than our Lake fells such "frost holes" are avoided by man, and houses, and fruit orchards, and cultivation are placed along that thermal belt that lies above the cold bottom lands. Even at the Lakes, where the settled weather that brings such valley frosts is comparatively rare in winter, householders congratulate themselves on a site raised by a hundred or two feet above the frosty mists of the dale.

Skating attracts visitors to the Lakes. Before they begin to arrive the inhabitants climb the lower slopes and skate on such early-frozen tarns as Ratherheath near Kendal, Lanty Tarn above Patterdale, Tewfit Tarn near Keswick, or Easedale Tarn. Then if the frost continues Rydal Lake is frozen; a dim sheet of ice broadens, beneath a cold rime that breathes about its dull surface, across Grasmere Lake; even Windermere, though this happens but seldom, may at last be frozen into complete stillness. Motorists come from far away, and by the light of their head-lamps skating goes on into the night, and, to add to the adventure, when they want to drive away again it may happen that the roads are glazed



GREAT GABLE FROM ESK HAUSE IN WINTER

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with ice, and to a motorist on an icy road all things are possible. Indeed, the freezing of his roads is the chief thing about frost that troubles the dalesman. As on the crags so on the roads the damp airs now and then deposit ice—sheets, road wide, of black ice. On the level, cars may manage to get along, but hills so glazed are too apt to lead the motorist into the next world. When Dunmail Raise is one sheet of ice and motor-vans, caught unawares, creep down the long hills to Grasmere with one side grinding into the stone wall; when Banner Rigg and Alice How, that pleasant switchback over to Windermere town, are dotted with a dozen derelict cars and several buses, all equally helpless on the icy hills, then getting about becomes a nuisance to the dalesfolk.

Hoar-frost, most fairy-like gift of winter, seems to belong to the valleys. When every twig of the Borrowdale birches is thick with tiny white crystals and the Rosthwaite pastures white as snow with the same delicate deposit, then the brief glow of sunrise, reflected from the clouds down into the white stillness of the dale, shines with an astonishing brilliance on the grass and bracken slopes of Maidenmoor that lie above the hoary dew of the valley. All day in winter the wooded defile between Grasmere and Rydal Water lies in the shadow of Loughrigg, its trees, and wall-tops, and dead leaves beside the road, white day and night in the three days of hoar-frost that are supposed to precede a thaw, but above them the great mass of Nab Scar rises in all its vivid winter colouring of rock and fern and bleached wild grasses. Perhaps hoar-frost is distilled but from the damper air of the dales and, in the drier levels

above, the more intense rigours of cold fail to dim the gold and russet of the wintry fern.

It is in times of frost that silence is found among the fells. When Easedale Tarn is frozen the wind is mute upon it. There is no sound of bird or stream. Beneath the formless pallor of a coming snowstorm and above the dim whiteness of the frozen tarn there is silence, a stillness that seems one with the fells, one with the sky, and sharing with them something in which man can have no part. And when Great Langdale, its fells snow-covered, its streams silent, its river flats grey-white with frost, fades into a dusk that seems heavy with the weight of bitter cold, then beneath Pike o' Stickle, a vague white shape against the brightening stars, the silence becomes, to anyone abroad, alone, a thing incredible, a thing that must surely break the next moment as a great frozen bubble might break and let in again the comfortable sounds of a world not frozen into stillness.

For those who love silence there are still the fells in frost.

In our islands snow, like cloud, is of the skies. As cloud hovers above our hills and plains so does snow hover, upheld from the earth by the invisible barrier of our mild airs. Snow falls in our skies, our clouds are white with snow, our winter sunshine lights strange wan colours on snow crystals in the air, but through the warm winds that keep our lowlands green snow can pass, almost always, but as rain. In the Atlantic airs that blow over us is damp enough to bury all the country-side in such snows that one summer would never melt; our snows are checked not by dryness

but by warmth. And this is why mountains, cool with their height above the land, shouldering up into those aerial levels where snow crystals move in noiseless clouds within the air, are snowed upon, deeper and deeper with every hundred feet they rise into the sky.

In the Lake Country the fells catch from the clouds snow as in summer they receive rain. They reveal the burden of the sky to the lowlands; transmute the formless pallor of an aerial snowstorm into the tangible whiteness of snow slopes; display along their massive sides the shifting line that marks the lower limit of snow crystals in the air. And as this lower limit rises and falls so does now one fell, now another, reach above it and so receive snow, until at last there comes a time when snow clouds sink down upon the land and dales and fells alike are white.

It is when snow is hovering, apparently capriciously, above the dales that the Lake Country is more beautiful than at any other time of year. Once the snow has covered dales as well as fells there is monotony in the white slopes that reach up, unchanged, from the black line of the valley beck up to the highest tops. Borrowdale under snow, with the Derwent flowing darkly between its white banks, is only less white than Glaramara above it because of the dusky shadow of its leafless woods, woods that seem to keep all day entangled in the network of their branches the frozen haze of night. Grasmere lake, frozen, becomes but a part of the wintry fells, subject as they to drifting snow, silent and motionless as they, all its shining dimmed and watery movements stilled. Clear streams flow dark as night through snow, waterfalls hang a murky white

against the snowy fells, everywhere there is but the blackness of stone walls, of trees shaken bare of snow by a little noiseless wind from the fells, of unfrozen lakes, dark as the depths of Wastwater beneath its snowy screes, and beyond this blackness there is nothing but the wide wastes of snow. Yet even so, wind, sunshine, and the pure depths of mountain air give something of life and stir and colour to the white country. Snow is blown in a shadowy cloud from the slopes of Seat Sandal out above the Raise road, or in a plume, delicate as a sea-gull's wing, constant as spray from a cataract, from the crags of Red Pike high above the black waters of Buttermere Lake. Sunshine moves golden as a cloudless evening upon the white mountains. The vale of Coniston, white and very still, after its few hours of winter sunshine is filled with the shadow of its enclosing fells, but a shadow that is as blue and clear as the snows are wan.

But when the snow hovers above the dales, then all the tawny gold of winter lying between the valley pastures and the arctic wastes above is at its most vivid, and on any fine December afternoon Grasmere folk may see the last of the day's sunshine, golden on the upper snows of Fairfield and Seat Sandal, and beneath it snows already dead white, and beneath them slopes of bracken, russet red, and below again the faint blue haze of frost and wood-smoke in the hollow of Grasmere. From Hartsop the whole range of the Helvellyn heights may shine, "white as no fuller can white them", in the far light of sunrise, and, below their snows, crag and woodland and fern slope down in every shade of gold and russet and that clear tinge which

belongs to rock in shadow, until their faint reflections are almost lost in the haze that stirs with the morning on Brotherswater.

So, to the idle off-come the Lake Country snows are a show, beautiful with an unearthly beauty. The dalesman detests them. But it is seldom that he is long burdened with snow, though it is sufficiently common in the dales to make it worth while for every village that can afford it to keep a snow-plough. A few years ago Grasmere was cut off from the outside world for four days because its snow-plough and that belonging to Ambleside failed, owing to some official misunderstanding, to meet. These snow-ploughs are V-shaped arrangements of planks, drawn by horses, one horse for a light fall, as many as four in heavy snow, with the point of the "V" in front weighted down with a sack full of something heavy. When a village has acquired one it cannot always afford to use it. Great Langdale suffered much for want of a snow-plough until within recent years, and now that it has one, if finances are low, it cannot afford to pay for men and horses to work it. The most memorable snowfall during recent years was that of October 1926. A wet snow, first with a high wind, afterwards in dead calm, fell heavily and lodged on the trees, still in the almost full leaf of a late autumn. As darkness fell, the quiet of the white maze of falling flakes was broken by the mournful sounds of breaking branches, by groanings, and sharp reports, crackings, and the heavy thud of falling timber. At Windermere, Grasmere, Langdale, Keswick, Coniston, indeed all over the district, walking abroad was dangerous in the extreme. Roads were blocked by great boughs

wrenched off the trunks, and in the silence of the night the noise of the shattering of the trees, weird as the howlings of lake ice when the water sinks beneath it, made a profound and painful impression on people lying wakeful in bed. Oaks suffered most; huge trees, many generations old, were stripped of their branches and still stand deformed and scarred all about the district. The roads were hidden in a maze of branches, and sticks of all sizes from "yardings" to huge limbs, thick as a man's body, were to be had for the picking up.

Even in winters when the Lake Country dales have little snow their inhabitants cannot escape from the effects of the deep and often persistent snow on the fells. The higher hills rise into those altitudes where snow may fall at any time of the year: exceptional falls have been known to linger on the heights till after June and the High Street range has been whitened afresh at midsummer, though there are on these fells no so-called "permanent" snow-beds like those that sometimes remain unmelted for several consecutive years on the Cairngorms. This persistent snow on the heights sends, in calm weather, its cold and scentless airs sinking down into the dales, there to check the springing of that early "bite" of grass which is so needed for the lambing ewes, and to hinder the advance of summer warmth, for until the last snows have melted from the tops there can be no real spring in the dales. The curious taste of snow-water may linger in the dales-folk's tea far on into the season, and the "snow broth" coming down the becks with the advent of warmer weather irritates the would-be angler and, pouring cold and heavy into the lakes, makes those shining waters

lie cold as winter, dimmed with a frosty haze at evening when the Lent lilies, wan in the dusk, are already in full flower upon their banks.

Wind, frost, and snow play but little part in determining the affairs of man at the Lakes. Some buildings, like barns on the Kirkstone Pass, up Fusedale behind Howtown, and on the Goldrill flats above Ullswater, have stepped gables, designed to resist wind. And the possible snow so far influences roof construction that depressions, like that "valley" in the roof of the widened Grasmere church which had to be done away with owing to snow lodging within it, are avoided when possible. But the rain and cloud of the Lake Country are all-powerful and on the buildings, the farms, and outbuildings, old in form if not in actual years, the weather has set the imprint of its wild centuries of storm. The farm-house characteristic of the district is nowadays, and has been for the last two or three centuries, built of stone, probably quarried within a few hundred yards from the site, or, in the case of the older buildings, brought from the nearest stream bed. The walls are at least two feet thick, with an outer and inner facing of good-sized slabs and a filling of smaller stones. The slabs are inclined so that they dip outwards and thus any rain that might drive into the wall drains away, and in all the older houses, built with dry walls owing to the scarcity of lime for mortar, as an additional precaution against wet the outer walls were coated with a layer of plaster, generally white. Modern houses with mortared walls are dry without this outer coating, but Grasmere church, originally white-plastered, was stripped bare some time ago by those seeking,

perhaps, gentility, and the rain so drove into the old walls that they had to be plastered again. These thick stone walls keep the houses warm in winter and so pleasantly cool in summer that to enter one from the heat of the dusty roads is like stepping into the coolness and shadow of a cave, while all sorts of intriguing cupboards are tucked away in the thickness of the wall, cupboards with carved oak doors, black with age, and bearing sometimes the initials of the farmer and his dame who built them a stone house, on a site as old as their "fore-elders", when the Scots ceased troubling long ago.

On top of the thick stone walls is a roof of the grey-green slates from Langdale or Borrowdale or Tilberthwaite or any one of the many slate quarries that have been scooped out of the fells, a roof, if it is old, of massive slabs rather than slates, with moss-filled crevices, and supported by great timbers, then easily obtained in the local forests. Small stone-mullioned windows and capacious stone porches with seats of slate make the old houses snug in all weathers, and a well laid kitchen floor of slate slabs resists indefinitely the passage of wet boots. A sidelight on the local climate is afforded in an inn at Nether Wasdale by four large mats of coconut fibre laid along the passage to the modern, plank-floored dining-room. By the time the muddy-footed tourist has trodden the fourth mat it has been borne in upon even the most careless of his type that he should wipe his feet.

Sometimes attached to the farm-house, sometimes standing apart from it, in which case it usually blocks all the view and takes much of the sunshine from the windows, is the great stone barn characteristic of the

district. Here, as in the Welsh mountains, the rainy climate necessitates the storage of hay, crops, and implements under cover. In the dales of the central Lake Country haystacks are unknown. The hay when, and if, it is at last gathered in, is stacked in the barns. Cows in winter must also be housed, for the wild weather, lack of feed, and sodden pastures make it impossible for them to range the fields then like their happier sisters in Dorset and the south. Thus it comes about, as a result of the weather, that the farm-house itself is often but a small and unremarkable unit amongst grey stone outbuildings, distinguished rather by its white plastered walls and its window curtains than by any advantage in size or aspect. Behind Howtown the lonely Cot Farm in Fusedale stands in the midst of no less than five stone barns and outbuildings.

The clouded light of the Lake Country dales, their uncertain sunshine and their heavy rain have in our day overspread their river flats and the lower fell slopes with a uniform greenness. Just as in the Alps the modern network of communications has enabled the Swiss peasant to abandon his crops and grow hay alone, so here the dalesfolk, relieved of the necessity of growing food for themselves, have let their little cornfields lapse back to grass, and farms are advertised as "all green side up". In the old days some wheat was grown, but only on the most favourable lands, as in the fertile sunny flats of the Keswick basin. Barley was more widespread, but oats were almost universal to supply "haver-bread" and porridge to dales that in those days had to be self-sufficing.

Now, wheat is unknown at the Lakes, and even oats,

a crop very tolerant of a wet peaty soil and sunless summers, is scarcely ever grown in the central dales, the difficulties of harvesting it when, and if, its protracted ripening is accomplished being great indeed in the rainy autumns that are all too common. It is to succulent leafy things that thrive in cool damp summers that the dales farmers turn nowadays that they can choose their crops, and so grass is supreme and the sole harvest is the hay harvest. But even grasslands can have too much rain, and those of the Lake Country, both the meadows of the dales and the wild pastures of the fells, exist on sufferance. They never attain to the comfortable stability of the Midland pastures, those great fields of ancient turf unchanging from year to year and so rich that young cattle fall sick on them. Here among the fells rain leaches from the soil its goodness, and on the impoverished slopes and the damp river flats alike moss grows and spreads, dark as a cloud shadow, killing the nutritious grasses, replacing them with its spongy, almost useless cushions. By manuring and periodical ploughing of the valley pastures moss is kept at bay in the dales, but much of the green surface of the fells is moss-covered and their value as feeding grounds thus very seriously diminished. In the old days when the open commons were overcrowded with beasts, every patch of real grass was kept eaten down to the ground by hordes of half-starved little black cattle, horses, and mountain sheep.

Hay grasses, cut before their seeds ripen, are easy to grow in a climate that makes ripening a doubtful and protracted business, but they are not easy to harvest. Haymaking at the Lakes may extend over months in a

bad summer and only a fraction of the crop, and that ill-saved, may be housed at the end. It is curious when the hunter's moon of October fills the Grasmere basin with its vague light to smell in the coolness of the dew the spring-like scent of new-mown hay, curious, even delightful to the tourist, but vexatious to the farmer. The devices to expedite the hay harvest that are common in other districts of cool and rainy summers are not used here; the dalesfolk do not wind their newly-cut hay in and out of tall open hurdles as the Alpine peasants do, neither do they adopt the elaborate ritual with which the Irish win at last dry hay from their rain-swept fields, neither can they afford to instal the plant for artificial drying of hay that a few big landowners in rainy Lancashire and in Scotland have had set up. They save what hay they can as best they can, and when it is scarce and much of the goodness has besides been washed out of it, both men and beasts suffer, the one in their pockets, the others from mysterious discomforts within. This scarcity of hay makes the keeping of dairy cows a difficulty, and though hardy Shorthorn cattle do well on the fell farms they prosper better and yield more milk when sold to lowland pastures.

When peat was the only fuel used to supplement the supplies of wood the climate once again made it as difficult to harvest the wild crop as the sown. Peat cut in early summer on the fell mosses had, like hay, to be dried out of doors before being stacked for winter. Peat is a damp thing at the best of times, indeed experts say there is less solid matter in a peat bog than there is in milk, and often enough before a rainy Lake Country summer had merged into a clouded autumn

the turves had crumbled away into a kind of mud. As long ago as the time of Elizabeth smelting operations were hindered at Keswick by a shortage of peat consequent upon a wet summer.

The Lake District farmer is then set down in the midst of weather that, in spite sometimes of weeks of mountain sunshine, will only occasionally permit the ripening of corn, that menaces his grasslands with the sure and stealthy advance of moss, that hinders his harvest, whether of oats or hay or peat, drenches his sheep and their pastures, and frightens away the more foolish of those summer visitors who might otherwise help to compensate him for a bad lambing season. And yet he thrives. He and his sheep have fought the mountain weather for a thousand years or so, and out of the shadow of storm and mist they win, as the quarryman wins grey slate from the rain-swept crags of Honister, wool and mutton and enough money to keep the old farm going from generation to generation.

CHAPTER XIII

TO-DAY IN THE ROTHAY VALLEY: THE TOURIST INVASION

Came home by Clappersgate. The valley very green; many sweet views up to Rydale, when I could juggle away the fine houses; but they disturbed me, even more than when I have been happier.—DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S JOURNAL

BY the end of the eighteenth century the light of a hidden sunrise was beginning to glow above the economic shadows in the Rothay valley: in other words, the earliest tourists had already arrived. These gentle strangers came in along the roads that were made following the Turnpike Acts of 1760, and marvelling, it would seem, almost as much at their own temerity as at the sights they saw, they wrote eloquent accounts of their adventures. The poet Gray in 1769 wrote, however, a journal of his travels at the Lakes that stands apart. It has about it something of the lucent clearness of the mountain shadows, of a quality of stillness soothing to the mind as cool waters to weary feet. And yet he suffered dreadfully from terrors. Beneath Gowder Crag, in Borrowdale, he was reminded of "those passes in the Alps, where the guides tell you to move with speed, and say nothing, lest the agitation of the air should loosen

the snows above, and bring down a mass that would overwhelm a caravan", and daunted by accounts of the "dreadful road" further up the valley, he stopped at Grange and was there comforted with butter, bowls of milk, thin oaten-cakes, and ale. Later writers, painstaking, conscientious creatures, criticized Gray, and jeered at his timidity. Yet for all their fun, Gray was, as it were, the clear medium through which the Lake scenery inscribed itself on his pages—his immediate successors too often wrote pompous catalogues of what they saw, pompously, through shadows of their own elegant personalities.

After Gray the early writers on the Lake Country seem to have regarded it as a show designed so that they might display, in describing it, their unexceptionable taste and culture. They disported themselves among the mountains in a truly elegant manner, and whether they were rowed over Ullswater in the Earl of Surrey's boat "adapted for eight rowers (for whom there are likewise caps and shirts)", and which mounted "twelve brass swivel guns, for the purpose of trying the echoes", or floated on Derwentwater in the moonlight, with two French horns being blown at suitable intervals on the shore, or caused horses to be conveyed out on to Bassenthwaite Lake and the boat to be sunk under them, the first to swim ashore being accounted the winner, they seem to have brought their own amusements and allowed the mountain spirit to have but little way with them. And very soon, though they admired the polishing effect of new villas on the rugged shores of Derwentwater and admitted that Keswick was becoming greatly improved since tourists resorted there, while seeing at Grasmere

still "a retreat for Arcadian Shepherds, guarded by almost inaccessible rocks from the vices and follies of the world", they began to lament the results of their own invasion. The "rattling tourist" demoralized the peaceful inhabitants, and turnpike roads destroyed, they said, provincial manners and dialects. Green in 1819 lamented that Ambleside was now become a modern village, and about this time the Rev. Mr. Hodgson wrote that owing to the improved means of communication "the peculiarities of this country are now verging fast into oblivion".

The Rothay valley shared in the first shower of benefits from the strangers. Gray beautifully described Grasmere, and nearly every subsequent writer did the best he could with it, too. Wordsworth came to Dove Cottage in December 1779, and early in the next century the old inn, David's, at Rydal, which is now the Glen Rothay Hotel, became in the hands of the Rev. Samuel Tillbrook the first holiday residence in the neighbourhood. From now onwards the valley, but particularly Ambleside and Grasmere, became increasingly the resort of strangers. Wordsworth lived for eight years at Dove Cottage, paying for it, out of his meagre income, £8 a year. There he did his best work. There he and his sister Dorothy welcomed, sometimes at very unseasonable hours, Coleridge, come over from Keswick, de Quincey, Southey, Sir Walter Scott. And there nowadays, because of all this, come, on an August day, between four and five hundred visitors. Wordsworth made the district widely known by his poems and his *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England.* When he left Dove Cottage to move into Allan Bank, then to Gras-

mere rectory, and at last to Rydal Mount, de Quincey was for many years tenant of Dove Cottage. Lower down the Rothay valley Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, at Fox How under Loughrigg, Harriet Martineau at the Knoll just outside Ambleside, and other distinguished residents brought the district into public notice.

In 1841 there were seventy habitations at Grasmere, in 1851 eighty-seven, in 1881 no less than 143, and now there are 248. Ambleside also grew and spread out from the old village centre along the Stock Beck down towards the flats and Waterhead. In the 'sixties omnibuses began to run between Grasmere and Ambleside, and the number of coaches to Windermere was increased. Roads were widened and their surface improved, and in 1904 the motor-buses, known from their original colour as Yellow Perils, of the Lake District Road Transport Company began to run.

So Grasmere, where in 1769 "no gentleman's staring house or garden walls" broke the "repose of this little unsuspected paradise", is now delivered over to the off-come, off-comes who live there, who summer there, who stay there in August, who come for the day. They are welcome. On holiday we are all off-comes, and those who visit the Lakes do so from a love for the beautiful that makes them, almost always, desirable guests. On their heads cannot be visited that maltreatment of the country-side which is a by-product of the modern development of transport. At Grasmere the by no means simple effects on Lake Country life of the invasion of strangers may be studied in some detail. Here for some generations now have been the strangers, and here also still survive descendants of the early

DOVE COTTAGE

dalesfolk, and their interaction upon each other and on the country-side is not without interest.

It is a far cry now from the days when Sir William Jackson (curates were then known as "sir") and his rector were the only educated people in Grasmere, and the curate, dying in 1569, left "to Cristofor Wolker's wyff Under Helme xiis. of newe money to be payed to hyr, whych she dyd bowrere for me in my tyme of nede". But the relations between all classes at Grasmere are still of the happiest. Those who live in residences may not now borrow money from their farmer neighbours, but they borrow everything else in time of need, and when frost has bound the water-pipes or snow hindered the coal lorries on their way from Windermere, those in possession of the lacking article hold a kind of open house: cottage housewives, busy upstairs, hear untroubled the passage of water-borrowing neighbours through their ground-floors, and buckets of coal are loaned as readily to a Lancashire merchant, shivering in his week-end cottage, as to the waller who is his next-door neighbour. Off-comes, indeed, in these days direct the social life of Grasmere. They are leisured people and full of ideas, and though they are as a rule loyally supported by the dalesfolk, it is, at Grasmere and elsewhere at the Lakes, the off-comes who, as a rule, initiate and are most energetically concerned in such social activities as the Women's Institutes, the Citizens' Union, the League of Nations Union, church work, the ministrations of the district nurse, the provision of reading-rooms, and the hundred and one other ways in which rural life of to-day may be made lively, respectable, and comfortable.

The Dialect Plays, helping to keep alive the old speech of Grasmere, a speech so individual to the dale that it is said to differ from the dialects of the valleys on either side, and the Rush Bearing in August, a pageant recalling the days when the earthen floors of churches were strewed with fresh rushes, Grasmere owes to the co-operation of dalesfolk and residents not native to the dale.

Farmers at the Lakes, though assured of a local market for their products, lose as well as gain by the off-come invasion. In the Rothay valley and elsewhere at the Lakes farming land is increasingly limited by building operations and by the amalgamation of farm holdings with residential estates. Moreover, farming interests are neglected by local administrative bodies, on which the farmers are seldom adequately represented. Thus, at Ambleside the recent making of bowling-greens on the field known as White Platts, by St Mary's church, called forth strong protests from local farmers against such an encroachment on their ancient fair-ground, protests that were ignored by the local council.

As recounted in Chapter IV, the little farm holdings in the Rothay valley had proved themselves unable to maintain their owners. In addition, they were often mortgaged. Thus, at Grasmere, when Green of Blind Tarn and his wife were lost in 1808 while coming over the snowy fells from Langdale, and their young children waited for them all night in the little cottage that seems ever since to stand in a grim shadow, his little holding was found to be heavily mortgaged, and the children had to be maintained by the charity of neighbours. So when off-comes appeared, willing and, indeed, anxious to pay fancy prices for what were often

perfectly useless bits of land, those of the statesmen who owned their little properties sold them, sometimes willingly, sometimes with bitterness, like old Rowlandson at Grasmere, whose family troubles compelled him to part with Lancrigg. Wordsworth paid no less than £300 for that steep and rocky field at Rydal known as the Rash Field, and now lovely in April with Lent lilies, descendants of that "host of golden daffodils" beside Ullswater. Land rose in value far above its worth from the farmer's point of view, and at Grasmere, when steep hill-sides and areas of reedy, craggy land sell for anything from 1s. 6d. a square yard upwards, it would almost seem that land retained for agriculture were an expensive luxury, were it not that, even here there is, since the war, but little demand for building land. There are only one or two farmers living on their own holdings now at Grasmere.

Until its rise as a holiday resort building at the Lakes was almost confined to the re-building of existing houses. The farms were small enough already, there was no room for further subdivision of the land, and hence houses on new sites were almost unknown except in regions where mining or quarrying led to an increase of population. Thus old farmsteads were re-built when necessary on old sites and in the traditional manner which considered but utility and the conditions of the locality. However, as strangers began to desire a life among the mountains, and along the roads, and later the railways, there came with them frightful things like corrugated iron, cheap red bricks, tiles, ill-seasoned window-frames made abroad, coloured glass, even little wooden houses, sometimes charming in themselves, but as out

of place at the Lakes as a wooden porch on a cathedral, things were sadly changed. Rich off-comes caused old houses to be re-modelled and new ones built in styles foreign to the district, and raised up distressingly permanent monuments to themselves that must for ever sit as uneasily in the country-side as a gold filling in a front tooth. There is periodically an outburst of correspondence in the local newspapers as to the use in Lake Country buildings of red tiles, and similar alien materials that are now cheaper than the local stone and slate. Some maintain the rights of Lake Country man to build in whatever way he chooses, and acclaim the "prettiness" of red tiles in such a green dale as, for example, Kentmere above Staveley. But it must be remembered that the Lake District is prized by holiday-makers for its individuality, for that close relation between its country-side and the ordering of life in its dales which held good until recently. Once let the most dreary blight of cosmopolitanism overspread the district and, with its human interest gone and its delicate beauty, viewed between petrol-pumps, dimmed, it will but have its little mountains, its small waterfalls, its very limited area of wildness to help it in competition with other districts of a larger and more robust beauty.

It is only necessary to consider the effect of wooden bungalows on the banks of the Eamont, where it draws, clear and shallow, slowly out of Ullswater; of the gaudy sun umbrellas of tea gardens beside Derwentwater and Windermere; of the wooden shops in the Patterdale woods; of those most frightful petrol-pumps and garages near Waterhead that now stand where, until a few years ago, the Windermere waves washed ashore, murmurous

A LAKELAND FARM AND WANSFELL PIKE

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and untroubled, on a little beach old and grey as they, to realize how painfully mistakes such as these intrude upon the beauty of things otherwise most lovely.

As regards alien buildings, Rydal, in the hands of its old owners, has scarcely suffered at all. At Ambleside the old houses that yet remain are almost lost in streets of new buildings, and have all the charm of discovery when suddenly recognized. Grasmere has not fared badly on the whole. With its many trees and the survival, even in the village itself, of old cottages, and at least some portions of the original Red Lion, of the tithe barn, and the old schoolhouse[1] at the church gate, it has so far escaped the worst effects of the plague of dull and alien building that set in with the arrival of visitors to the region.

But at Grasmere more than elsewhere in the Rothay valley the devastating results of modern motor-traffic are displayed. In the summer season motor-buses rumble into Red Lion Square about every seven minutes during the day. Added to these are the vast numbers of private cars touring the district. Moreover, there are still some lengths of road in the village where two buses cannot pass, and many where there is not room for a double line of traffic plus a Grasmere citizen on foot. The alternative to this somewhat adventurous state of affairs is wider roads. At Grasmere also is displayed, in lengths at present mercifully short, the full effect of such widening. From Read's Corner to the Red Lion stretches a barren desert of road so uncomfortably out of proportion with the low village houses and

[1] Here for the last sixty or seventy years has been made and sold the Grasmere gingerbread, of scent and taste ambrosial.

the little enclosures of land on either side as to give the most accustomed and casual spectator an uneasy feeling. The widening of the whole length of road through the village is under consideration, and is inevitable once funds permit it. Over the Raise and beyond Thirlmere is another length of modern road. Very wide, so wide that a small aeroplane recently alighted upon it and flew away again when the pilot had read a signpost; its old bends transformed into gentle curvings; its stone walls neatly surmounted with iron railings, it stretches its dreary breadths through Legberthwaite.

These are but two examples of road-widening at the Lakes since the war, and the process still actively continues. Broad and sterile wastes, bounded too often by trim walls with mortared tops, they stretch across a country-side part of whose unrivalled charm lies in the fact that it is full of little lovely things, wooded hillocks, little crags, queer-shaped tiny fields, all tucked away cosily between the fells and piteously out of proportion to highways that in some places would accommodate four lines of traffic in a Lancashire cotton town. The old roads, marked out, perhaps, as the tracks of Norse settlers between farm and farm, had up to the tourist age developed but in response to local needs. They had evolved through ages when the boundary of a pasture, the vagaries of a mountain beck, a patch of peaty ground, were sufficient to determine their course for men whose road-making appliances were primitive, and whose road traffic consisted but of pack-horses or of farm carts. Even the mineral traffic at the Lakes seems to have been carried on along the old tracks, impassable in winter. The old roads were as

much natural growths of the country-side as the old farms.

The new roads are links between Kendal and Keswick, between Blackpool and Windermere. They form a part of the national system of communication. The authorities hold them to be necessary, but the value of these roads to Lake Country dwellers is in some doubt. They are costly to make and to maintain. They enable the motorist to pass with speed, safety, and comfort through the whole district in less than a day, and display before him as he goes what modern roads can do to spoil the beauty of such a country-side. And whether for these reasons or for others known only to the restless, hurrying mind of the motorist, the modern traveller at the Lakes seldom stays more than a night or two in the neighbourhood. The days when the same families returned year after year to the same lodgings for a stay of a month or six weeks are almost gone. Roadside hotels benefit by supplying meals and week-end accommodation to motorists, but landladies and boarding-houses are suffering from the change.

This leads the contemplative mind on to the reflection as to whether tourists are not subject, like other living things, to successive changes in type. An abandoned quarry is colonized by plants who follow each other in a succession, first the pioneers who love the open and the rock crevices, and then, plant by plant, other types, seeking the growing shade and deepening soil created by their lengthening chain of predecessors. It may very well be that tourists similarly succeed each other. There came the pioneers. By their coming they paved the way to the Lakes for less individual and adventurous types,

and the arrival of these automatically deterred the pioneer kind of person from coming any more. Following hard upon the holiday-making tourist, with his leisurely weeks at the Lakes, has come the motorist and the day tripper, and they in their turn are now reacting upon visitors of the pre-war type and driving such of them as remain from their old haunts at Ambleside and Keswick to the less accessible nooks and crannies of the district, from which, like the eagles, it is to be feared they may ultimately be dislodged. One local paper at least comments upon the "decreased popularity" of the Lakes as a holiday resort, and foresees for the district a dismal future should the hand of the "improver" not be stayed.

To cherish the tourist industry has become an economic necessity at the Lakes. The tourist industry will vanish unless the district is saved from destruction. And it would be destroyed, for a time at least, if it were abandoned to a piecemeal exploitation by speculative builders, for what we know as the Lake Country is more than its fells and dales—it is the whole created by centuries of interaction between the country and its inhabitants, the whole of what may be regarded as an organism in which the living matter is as essential a part as is the bony skeleton of its mountain system. Overlaid by a stratum of alien buildings and alien human activities, and intersected by broad roads bearing streams of alien traffic, the Lake District would be as surely lost as an ancient pasture buried, like those in Saint John's Vale long ago, beneath an incoherent layer of flood rubbish. To avoid so horrid a smothering of the native life of the region, so reckless a destruction of its incomparable loveliness, has arisen the movement for the "preservation" of the Lake

District. The National Trust now owns considerable areas in the region: much land about Derwentwater, Ullswater, and Windermere belongs to it, and hence, for ever, to the nation, and besides these properties it holds land in Borrowdale, Great Langdale, the Duddon valley, and on the Ennerdale and Scafell heights, as may be seen from the map at the beginning of the book.

The artificial preservation from outside of the characteristic features of any region is admittedly a regrettable necessity. It is moreover an experiment. It submits the area preserved to the perpetual control of those to whom considerations of "taste" must take precedence of economic factors. Such a situation is artificial and is fraught with danger. However, preservation of the Lake Country is an organized means of defence against that loss of individuality that threatens, with the spread of easy communications, not the Lakes alone, but all our country-side. If the National Trust, which has not, in all cases, full powers over the lands under its control, finds itself able in the Lake Country to preserve without fossilizing, to combine what is good in modern development with the maintenance of the local characteristics, to admit, as it were, a mountain echo of the raucous, but, to a lonely dale-head household, cheerful clamour of our century, then preservation must be expected to accomplish what is hoped from it provided that it comes, in time, to be extended over the whole region.

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CHAPTER XIV

A LAKE-COUNTRY TOWN: KESWICK

Upon the side of this lake, in a fruitful field, encompassed with wet, dewy mountains and protected from the north winds by Skiddaw lyes Keswick, a little market-town.—WILLIAM CAMDEN

THE Lake Country does not breed towns. It is lacking in those conditions of local wealth and accessibility which, individually or together, cause towns to grow. Its potential town sites remain potential sites, marked but by an isolated farm or by a lonely bridge, of stone perhaps in the days when most were made of wood, or by some mill, in ruins now, that ground the oats brought to it along easy ways that might have also brought the trade and clamour of a town, but that they ran back into a wilderness. Indeed, when the beginnings, as far as they are known, of the present Lake Country villages are considered it appears that only exceptionally did trade or defence or mineral wealth, those factors that make towns, play any appreciable part in determining their sites and that they were almost always simply collections of farm-houses, self-sufficing, and set down in the most convenient spot from an agricultural point of view.

Since, then, the genius of this little knot of Lakeland

mountains is hostile to the growth of towns (for which may Providence be thanked), it is not surprising that Keswick, with its four thousand or so inhabitants, should be the biggest place in the whole district. Almost any one of the many suburbs about some Lancashire town is bigger than Keswick. And yet Keswick, but a village according to its size, is unmistakably a town; a town that, like many another mountain growth, is, and has always been, small and of slow development. Any notable expansion that Keswick may experience in the future will not be due to its own natural growth as a Lake-Country town, but must be an artificial accretion imposed on it from without. Left to itself it can but remain a small market town, the centre of a country-side both poor and restricted in area.

That Keswick grew to be anything beyond a village was due to its position at a meeting place of many routes through the fells. Yet at its beginning it must have been conditioned by those features of the immediate locality that alone interested the earliest settlers at the Lakes. Here in the vale of Keswick were to be found various things very comfortable in so wild a country-side. The vale is open to the south and, in appropriate weather, lies full, like a bowl, of sunshine beneath the grave, dark slopes of Skiddaw that shelter it from the north winds. Spread out within it are wide spaces of low-lying land, covered with a soil deep for a mountainous country and much of it the fertile deposit of rivers. Once these flats were drained, corn could be grown here and meadow grass. Indeed, the vale of Keswick was noted for corn locally in the early nineteenth century. The lakes and rivers were, of course,

full of fish. There was wood, at first for the taking, from the forests that must have covered the drier parts of the vale; peat in plenty from Matterdale and Skiddaw and local bogs; stone from stream beds for house walls and, later on, slate from Skiddaw and Borrowdale for their roofs. Moreover, in the surrounding mountains there were minerals and along the hurrying Greta and the little becks that come tumbling in miniature chasms down from Skiddaw, there was water-power in plenty. So here, at a time when Keswickians were accustomed to rely on themselves without troubling the outside world, were to be found food and shelter and relief from the rigours of the fells, and, when trade began to grow, there were wool and corn and minerals to be traded and ways along which they could easily be brought to Keswick. The local supplies of fuel and water-power made possible any manufactures that the townsfolk might seek to engage upon to satisfy the needs of the rural country-side.

But there was one troublesome thing in the vale of Keswick with which succeeding generations have all had to cope. It has always suffered from floods. Into its hollow are poured the waters from Borrowdale and Thirlmere, from Skiddaw and Blencathra, and from the vale of Newlands. The Greta, a tempestuous river whose strange and terrifying noises in times of flood were noted by the old writers on the district, overflows its banks in its devious course across the flats, and when in really high flood reverses the waters of the Derwent at its junction with that river near the outlet of Derwentwater, and so pours the Thirlmere waters into that lake. Thus Derwentwater ceases for the moment to

have any outlet, and, as a result, spreads quietly over the lowlands about it; turns the "Isthmus" (early called Espenes or "headland of aspens"), that promontory on which is now Keswick bathing place, into an island; fills the shallow green trough below the lodging-houses of the Heads; and so raises the water-level that the run-off of surface waters from a wide area about Keswick is retarded. Between Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite there are wide-spread floods after heavy rain, while after very heavy rain these two sheets of water join, and the old lake comes back again as it was before the Greta and the Newlands Beck cast their burden of stones and soil athwart its centre. Moreover, almost every mountain beck that comes down into the vale brings with it such a load of stones, dropped by its suddenly checked waters as they reach the flats, that their beds are raised above the level of the land on either side and, were they not restrained, they would spread out in ill-defined sheets of water and stones over a wide area.

There is plenty of evidence that the vale of Keswick was liable to be flooded and was, indeed, more or less permanently water-logged in the early days of its settlement by man. Thirteenth-century charters of Fountains Abbey describe the road then joining Crosthwaite and Portinscale, and continuing to the foot of Whinlatter Pass, as a causeway, which ran on an embankment through the marshes. In about 1210 land was granted between Portinscale and "the stone bridge on the land of Thomas beside the great marsh—thence, as the marsh extends to the Derewent—west as far as the marsh and as the marsh extends to the high-road of

Portinscale". This causeway road held up the drainage of the Newlands valley and caused a tarn to form there called Husaker Tarn. The second of the two roads from Crosthwaite ran along the foothills of Skiddaw above the flood area, and so by the eastern shore of Bassenthwaite.

During the centuries of his occupation of the vale of Keswick man has done his best to cope with its superabundant waters. The mountain streams, like the Applethwaite Beck and the Newlands Beck, are embanked. They flow in places well above the level of the flats and so give trouble now and then. The Newlands Beck in particular, its vagaries having been somewhat neglected during the war, has had to be restrained by works of considerable magnitude within the last few years. The drainage of the levels between the two lakes was, in the days when the dalesfolk did things for themselves, considerably helped by a periodic clearance of the outlet of Bassenthwaite Water. Now no one does this and the lower lands, about Braithwaite for example, suffer while invocations are made to the County Council for help. Rather over a hundred years ago writers describing the Keswick of those days comment on the need for drainage of the lands about the town and on the hardships suffered by parishioners going to church across the flat to Crosthwaite, but to the visitor of to-day, unless he rambles perversely, and far afield, during a flood, none of all this wateriness of Keswick vale is apparent. The town itself is, and always has been, dry and comfortable on its rising ground, and the periodic annoyance of the farmers, when crops and pastures are submerged, is hidden from the tourist.

In spite of its floods the advantages of the vale of Keswick were such that, early for the Lake Country, men settled themselves here. Men of the New Stone Age lived here in what, for that misty period when men were few upon the earth, were large numbers. They made stone tools near Portinscale. They roamed through the vale, half hunters, half farmers; saw the sunrise on the fells above the forests; heard wind and water passing through the great hollow as we hear them to-day; and watched, from their settlements on the rising ground, pale sheets of flood-water spread and dwindle upon the flats. At some period men of whom we know nothing built the stone circle on high ground at Castlerigg. At some period, perhaps earlier, perhaps later than the time of the Romans, people, probably British, lived on the lowest slopes of the Helvellyn range above the present quarries at Threlkeld; built themselves what seems to have been a village on the knoll known as Bristowe Hill beside Crosthwaite Church; sheltered in that fort on Peel Wyke hill near the Pheasant Inn at Bassenthwaite where their ramparts and ditches are yet, now sunk in the leafy stillness of the woods. On the lower slopes of Skiddaw, above Applethwaite and the wet flats, are terraces that seem once to have been cultivated, and when, after the Norse, the Normans came they set their church of Crosthwaite on a little hill, beside that British village where they found, still lingering, the legend of Saint Kentigern. A string of old hamlets lies along the lower slopes of Skiddaw on the Under Skiddaw road, hamlets that look abroad over the wide flats between the lakes, while Portinscale, Braithwaite, Thornthwaite, and the ancient village of

Castlerigg, were all set on land well above flood-level, and when at last Keswick grew up, it did so on rising ground beside the river Greta.

Keswick is not an old town. First mention of it is found rather before the middle of the thirteenth century, when the de Derwentwater of that time gave leave to the monks of Fountains Abbey to have a mill dam on the Greta at "Kesewic". To antiquarians "kesewic" signifies "cheese dairy", so that the earliest reference to Keswick shows that both agriculture and water-power presided at its birth. There was no town here then, and there is no evidence that there was even a village, though by now there were a church, vill, and mill at Crosthwaite. But Keswick grew, and in 1276 it was granted the right to hold a weekly market. That the town was still but a little one and its market of small importance seems clear from the fact that when people began to hold a market in Crosthwaite churchyard and trade every Sunday in corn and flour, beans, peas, linen and cloth, fish and meat, it was not Keswick that protested in 1306, but Cockermouth. However, to the water-power and meadows of Keswick had been added by now such converging tracks as brought at least some merchandise and customers; indeed, it is said that Keswick grew up beside an old road, and the mention of a stone bridge near Portinscale in the thirteenth century shows that there must have been considerable traffic in the vale, though the term "stone bridge" implied in those days but a flat bridge of timbers resting on stone piers.

It is above all as a route centre that Keswick becomes notable from now on. Here meet three main highways

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DERWENT VALE FROM MILLBECK GILL, SKIDDAW

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of travel; that from the Eden valley and from Penrith over the wind-swept wastes of Hutton Moor and along the lowest slopes of Blencathra and Skiddaw; that from the south by Dunmail Raise and the Thirlmere valley; that from the western lowlands and the little seaports of Cumberland by way of Bassenthwaite. Here also meet all sorts of little local ways, over Whinlatter and Newlands passes, down from Borrowdale, over from the Naddle valley, and St. John's Vale, so that the whole Lake Country is tributary to Keswick, for the routes from Penrith and by Dunmail Raise draw to themselves many ancient ways by dale and fell from Haweswater and Ullswater and the southern lakes of Westmorland.

During some two and a half centuries from 1300 Keswick no doubt comported itself as little market towns should do. In 1303 there were thirty tenants at "Kesewik." It stood in a fairly prosperous region; along the eastern shore of Bassenthwaite were farming lands noted as of exceptional value in the reign of Edward I, and in the fifteenth century the Threlkeld district, up the valley on the Penrith road, was noted for the number of its tenantry. Learning was not neglected, and Keswick school is thought to have been founded as early as the fourteenth century in a building adjoining Crosthwaite church. The religion of St. Herbert still lived, like a flame, unquenched by centuries of wild Lake weather and the grim struggles of man to win a living from the wilderness; in the fourteenth century was instituted an annual pilgrimage in April to St. Herbert's Island, and indulgences were granted to those Crosthwaite parishioners who attended their vicar on the occasion.

Mass was celebrated on the island in memory of the saint and his friend St. Cuthbert, and so the same shining waters that enclosed St. Herbert, alone with God upon his little islet, had their green spring reflections broken seven hundred years later by the prows of the faithful. In 1901 a mould for making little crucifixes, probably to be sold as souvenirs to pilgrims taking boat there, was found at Portinscale.

Besides its religion Keswick had to consider war in those days. For beyond Skiddaw, like the menace of storm clouds on the horizon, lay the dark shadows of Border strife, and from Skiddaw the Keswick folk saw Criffel, its far cone blue with distance; the waters and yellow sands of the Solway; the desolate woods and marshes of the Debatable Land, a country-side whose long gloom of war was made lurid too often by flames when Scot and English, each in his turn, fired the stacks and thatch roofs of his enemy. Early in the fourteenth century the Scots had come raiding, and the valuation of the Norman church, that had superseded an older wooden church near Mirehouse on Bassenthwaite Lake, fell from 26/8 to 2/8 as a result of the devastation they wrought. Landowners in the district found it wise to strengthen their houses against the Scots and the halls of Wythop in the western Bassenthwaite fells, Millbeck under Skiddaw, and Threlkeld, were fortified. But Keswick itself, sheltered, unlike Penrith, amongst mountains, probably suffered but little from attack. There is no evidence that it was ever fortified, as was Penrith, or even defended by walls, but by the middle of the fifteenth century, and probably before, the townsfolk maintained a beacon on Skiddaw.

In all these years Keswick, almost as directly a growth of its surrounding country-side as were the sheep whose wool came to its market, remained a small town, "a lytle, poore market towne". But somewhere about 1560 it was brought into touch with the outside world. At this time Germans from Augsburg founded the Company of Mines Royal, and chose Keswick as the centre of their activities. They set up smelting-houses at Brigham, where there is now a stone bridge over the Greta about a mile from Keswick on the Penrith road, and for about eighty years Keswick remained a mining metropolis. Now its accessibility was utilized to the full. The Germans opened mines in some eight or ten of the Lakeland dales, and they were in frequent communication not only with these mines at Coniston, Caldbeck, Newlands, and elsewhere, but also drew personnel and supplies from what was far indeed in those days, from London and the Midlands, Ireland, and the east coast at Newcastle-on-Tyne. There had, of course, been many little attempts at mining at the Lakes before the Germans came; as in most mountainous countries the quest for minerals must have led to an exploration of its inner fastnesses by outsiders that might otherwise have been long delayed. But the Germans were backed by money from Augsburg. They brought the Lake District into the channels of international commerce; spent huge sums in wages and equipment; employed and maintained during their reign many hundreds of the dalesfolk. And when, by the middle of the seventeenth century, after years of fruitless struggle against adversity, the company came to a final end, the people of Keswick and for very many miles around were thrown back on what must have seemed the very inade-

quate resources of their own country as exploited by themselves.

The Company of Mines Royal came to an end, but as in the case of many another mining centre, Keswick found herself still possessed of advantages that, apparently unimportant in the period of feverish mining activity, are yet as lasting as these activities are generally short-lived. The vale of Keswick was still fertile and populous. During the reign of the miners the Keswick leather fair, known as Morlan Fair, was famous, and by 1623 the tenants of Keswick were prosperous enough to pay more than fourteen thousand pounds to the lord of the manor to secure that fines on their holdings, on death or alienation, should not exceed four times the customary rent. This transaction must have aided considerably the somewhat precarious prosperity of the little town. It would be interesting to know at what period the Keswick courts were built, when the lure of the town was such that people from the country-side, flocking to it in search of employment, had to be housed in cottages built, no doubt, in the gardens of the older habitations. At some time also the nave and chancel of Crosthwaite church were widened. A writer of 1675 noted that though there were no great gentry hereabouts, yet there were "many substantial monsires". The modest prosperity of the little town was moreover increased by manufactures that utilized the water-power of the Greta as the monks had done long before. Thus there were woollen mills on the Greta and in such hamlets as Millbeck and Applethwaite, where the Skiddaw streams pour down to the vale. There were manufactures of agricultural implements at Keswick; tan-yards, and

many shoemakers and saddlers; pencil-works that depended on the Borrowdale "wad"; even a cotton-mill. About 1695 Keswick built itself a town hall of, it is conjectured, stones from the ruins of the Radcliffes' house on Lord's Island, and it was on the site of this picturesque building, raised on pillars and with outside galleries, that was built in 1813 the present market hall, a curious edifice, no longer used as town hall, and scheduled by Government as an "ancient monument". But in spite of all this Keswick remained but a little town, "a small market town in decay", even "a mean village", as someone unkindly remarked in 1774. As already noted, its country-side was poor, its trade neces sarily small, but once recovered from the collapse of its mining interests it might have become a comfortable little rural centre had not a second invasion from outside given it an artificial stimulus and led to the growth of the Keswick of to-day.

Strangers came seeking, instead of minerals, scenery. They found it. After a day's travel, from the height of Castlerigg they saw below them the great hollow, dusky with evening; the shining waters of the two lakes; a blur of pale wood-smoke above the little town; and solemnly confronting them, black against the dying sunset, those heights of Causey Pike and Grisedale Pike and Grasmoor that stand between Keswick and the west. If not too disconcerted by the steep windings of the downward road they could see up Borrowdale that long gulf of shadow, darkened with mountain shapes scarcely less shadowy, that beyond the dim shining of Derwentwater showed, then as it does now, that night was already gathering there, that mountain night which,

like an evening mist, from every hollow and valley among the fells rises and spreads until at last even the top of Skiddaw, lit with sunset above the climbing shadow, is darkened against the stars. And when, comforted by trout and fell mutton and the blaze of oak logs, these earliest tourists strolled adventurously forth, there was Derwentwater, mysteriously stirred in the windless starlight, moving with watery murmurs against the rocks of Friar's Crag, and over the vague pallor of its waters and the dusky shapes of its islands the sound of distant waterfalls coming, without haste, without pause, from out of the night.

Not all the early tourists liked this sort of thing. Among the dalesfolk themselves were from early days intrepid mountain climbers. But some of the visitors felt poorly, like the gentleman accompanying Mr. Hutchinson's party in 1793, who, on ascending some way up the gentle slopes of Scale Fell on Blencathra "wished to loose blood and return"; at least one collapsed, like another member of the same party who, later on, was seen through the mists lying prostrate on the ground near Scales Tarn, while all of them approached the mountains with a cautious respect from which it sometimes seems we are nowadays suffering too great a reaction. However that may be, by the end of the eighteenth century courageous outsiders were building themselves residences round Keswick. The town became the "London of the Lakes", and from a directory of 1811 it appears that there were by then some fifteen residences of "people not in business" in the immediate neighbourhood, while of the townsfolk themselves the greater number were occupied as shopkeepers, innkeepers, and woollen manufacturers, as

became a market town still with something of its old manufacturing interests left, and that was also beginning to try and satisfy the needs of strangers. By now Coleridge, who had come to Keswick in 1800, and Southey, who settled at Greta Hall three years later, were drawing public attention to the neighbourhood as Wordsworth did for Grasmere.

In modern Keswick there are no woollen manufactures. There are, indeed, no manufactures of any kind save pencils. The pencil-works beside the Greta still send a delicate scent of cedar-wood floating abroad, and still make very excellent pencils. Tourists buy most of them. There are still shoemakers in Keswick: they make admirable shoes for tourists. The market still creates a pleasant confusion in the Market Place every Saturday, but scarcely any local and farm produce is sold at it; fruit, china, drapery goods, and fish, gathered from the ends of the earth, are taken from motor-vans and spread out upon its stalls. To a very small extent the town is still an agricultural centre, as is shown by such events as the Herdwick ram fair held there in October, but actually it lives on tourists. Trains, motor-buses, charabancs, private cars, pour into it in summer. Hotels flourish, and establishments with modest enough frontages extend back, as does the Royal Oak, an incredible distance from the street. And for every hotel there must be, even yet, a dozen lodging-houses.

Thus it has come about that of those things that caused the Keswickian forefathers to gather beside the Greta but two, the easy accessibility and the dryness of its site, remain of importance to the town, while a feature which early Keswick ignored, namely, the

appearance of its surrounding country-side, has become the foundation of its modern prosperity. Before history, men went about their business in this mountain hollow and so began that long interaction between man and the vale of Keswick which has by now produced Keswick town and the modern Keswick townsman. That interaction continues. The Keswick of to-day is no more a finished product than was the Keswick of Edward I, but what Keswickians and their country-side will in the future produce between them, either of town or townsman, who can say?

As at Keswick, so it is for the whole Lake Country. Nature is at work upon the fells and dales as tirelessly as she was before man came, and the country-side we know is changing insensibly before our eyes. Lake Country man is changing also. During centuries that have sufficed barely to dim the edges of glacier marks on the rocks of the Ullswater islands he has passed through all the stages between savagery and the state in which he finds himself to-day. What lies ahead of development for him, of ultimate change for the Lake country-side, of an altered relationship between the two, no one can foresee. Yet it must be that something of the old Lake Country, something of the old Lake Country life, will survive and assert itself perpetually in man's affairs. The natural conditions that directed the life of primitive man in the Lake Country are not altered. They persist. As phase after phase of human activity passes by in the district these natural conditions must be expected to preserve the essential Lake Country, a country periodically despoiled of its woodlands, blackened by the smoke of iron-forges, dotted with woollen-mills,

defaced by tips of mine refuse, crossed by a network of motor roads, burdened with alien buildings, and yet that must as surely periodically emerge from these superficial trappings as Skiddaw emerges at last from the most persistent cloud. Human enterprise in the Lake Country must be moulded at last to a Lake Country form or suffer extinction. But such moulding takes much time, and for our own sakes, and that of succeeding generations, it is well that the Lake Country should not be left to its own, slow, inevitable way of dealing with alien growths. Moreover, even purely local industries may, though they cannot vulgarize the Lake Country or detract from its individuality, spoil the beauty of its little, ancient landscapes.

Generations of lost beauty can never be recaptured, and the Lake Country, with its clouds poised upon it, sunlit, like the risen spirits of its mountains, should be kept most lovely, an island as individual in the dreary uniformity of modern days as its hills and clouds form an island of shadow and sunshine clear upon the far horizons of our north-west sea-board.

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